

Saddam denies having cancer

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Monday denied he was suffering from cancer and said reports of his illness were being put out to demoralise the Iraqi people, the official news agency INA reported. President Saddam told a cabinet meeting he was fit enough to swim twice across the Tigris River or carry out military service, the agency said. The Foreign Report, a newsletter of the British Jane's Information Group, said last week that the president was being treated by European cancer specialists in Baghdad for Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph system. But President Saddam said such reports were being spread by the international media to "undermine the confidence of Iraqi people." He declared he was "well, carrying out my duties in times of peace and war and up to military service," according to INA. "I have flu every year or two, like most people, and I am not suffering from any illness, thanks be to God," he said. "If it wasn't winter I would have swum twice across the Tigris River as I like to do sometimes," he added.



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Arab-Israeli economic talks open today

AMMAN (J.T.) — Planning Minister Rima Khalaf left for the Netherlands on Monday to take part in an Arab-Israeli meeting sponsored by the Dutch government. The meeting which will be held in the Hague, will be attended by ministers from Egypt, Israel, the Palestine National Authority and Jordan, is to discuss mechanisms for cooperation among these countries in the implementation of regional projects. Dr. Khalaf is accompanied by an official delegation comprising representatives of her ministry and the economic advisor at the prime ministry, Basem Awadallah.

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Arafat visits Sweden today

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will meet Swedish officials Tuesday and attend a ceremony where a peace prize will be given to young Israelis and Palestinians. In his first visit to Europe since his election on Jan. 20, Mr. Arafat will meet with Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén to discuss the Middle East peace process, said a ministry spokesman, Ulrika Long. "They will discuss progress in the peace process and the international community's commitment to development in Gaza and the West Bank," said Ms. Long. Mr. Arafat will visit King Carl XVI Gustaf Tuesday afternoon. He will then go to a ceremony where a group of young Palestinians and two associations of young Israelis are to receive the 1995 Olof Palme Award for their peace efforts.

Egypt reins in litigious islamists

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's parliament passed a law Monday to rein in Islamic fundamentalists who pursue intellectuals and artists through the courts accusing them of heresy, the official news agency MENA reported. The new law, which was passed by an overwhelming majority, prevents private individuals from taking direct legal action to order a man divorced from his wife, as appended to a university professor in June 1995 (see page 2).

Opposition set to take over in Iran — Iraqi paper

AGHDAD (AFP) — An official Iraqi newspaper on Monday predicted that the opposition would soon seize power in Tehran and launched a scathing attack on an Iranian newspaper. "The mullahs must know that the train of the (opposition) National Resistance led by the president of Iran, Mr. Khatami, is heading directly and rapidly to Tehran," Al-Thawra said. "Such is the fate of those who try to interfere in the affairs of Iran," the paper said, apparently referring to Iranian mediation efforts between warring factions in Iraq. "The attitude of the mullahs' game is dictated by hatred of a desire for revenge," it said (Iran criticizes Iraq, page 2).

Bombs in Algeria kill policeman

PARIS (R) — At least one policeman was killed and six others wounded when two bombs exploded in Algeria Saturday, Algerian newspapers reported on Monday. A French language daily Al-Ahram reported that a truck laden with 200 kilograms of explosives went off near a police station on the edge of the capital Algiers killing a policeman and wounding others. The truck exploded late on Saturday night in Sidi Moussa, about 15 kilometres south of Algiers. Other policemen were wounded when another bomb exploded two hours later in another part of Sidi Moussa.

Egypt Brotherhood appeals court ruling

CAIRO (AFP) — The Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Egyptian union appealed on Monday a decision by the court to take control of the union, legal sources said. The union lodged an appeal to the court against the ruling issued by Cairo's court of appeal. The court automatically suspends the ruling temporarily until the appeals court, which began hearing the case on Monday, decides whether or not to make the suspension permanent.

Israel says U.S. cannot bridge gaps with Syria

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel played down expectations on Monday of a breakthrough in talks with Syria but ruled out the need for the United States to offer proposals to bridge gaps on security.

Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, recently returned from meeting President Bill Clinton in Washington, said it was "too early for any kind of bridging proposals." He said any such proposals should only bridge narrow gaps. He told foreign journalists current talks between Israeli and Syrian diplomats and military experts near Washington had made "modest" progress but in atmosphere rather than substance. In a wide-ranging foreign policy news conference, Mr. Barak also linked the start of negotiations on a final settlement with the Palestinians to the cancellation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) charter which calls for the destruction of Israel.

Mr. Barak said there was little point in starting talks in May on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat if the charter still stood. Israel expected Mr. Arafat to cancel the charter not just to convene the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and urge it to do so. Mr. Arafat needs two-thirds of the PNC to rescind the charter.

Mr. Barak, a former army chief who became foreign minister in November, was

combative when asked if Israel was refusing to acknowledge shifts in Syria's stance.

He again linked the depth of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights to the "depth" of Syria's implementation of peace. He insisted that Israel have security and surveillance capabilities against a surprise Syrian attack. Israel wanted open borders, full diplomatic ties, trade and a Syrian commitment to peace in South Lebanon, he said.

He said Israel would not give up water flowing in to the Sea of Galilee whose eastern shore touches the base of the Golan plateau. "Peace with Syria will not come at the expense of Israel's water supplies," he said.

These are all issues bedeviling the talks at Wye Plantation in Maryland where U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher offered "substantive ideas" to both sides late last week, U.S. officials said.

They did not disclose the ideas. Mr. Christopher is due to undertake another Middle East shuttle next month to try to break the logjam ahead of elections in both Israel and the United States.

Mr. Barak disagreed that Washington was growing impatient with Israel over the talks. He said President Clinton had stressed substance over schedules at their meeting last week.

Mr. Barak said he would

not hazard a guess on whether an agreement with Damascus was possible this year until after Mr. Christopher's visit.

"It will take time," he said he could not tell whether it would take "three months, 13 months or 23 months." Asked whether Israel had introduced its widely-acknowledged nuclear capability as a bargaining chip, Mr. Barak said this was not an issue. He stuck to Israeli policy of neither confirming nor denying whether the Jewish state had nuclear weapons. He said it was premature to talk of Israel committing itself to a nuclear-free Middle East.

Syria, he said, had effective armed forces capable of launching missiles with chemical warheads. He said Syria had 4,000 tanks, 700 aircraft, 2,500 artillery pieces and B and C type Soviet missiles.

Despite this, Western military analysts rank U.S.-supplied Israel as the best-equipped fighting force in the region.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres meanwhile clashed with the head of military intelligence on the best way to strike peace with Syria amid growing pessimism over the negotiations, army radio said Monday.

Mr. Peres stressed to Sunday's weekly cabinet meeting the importance of the discussions being held at the Wye Plantation outside Washington.

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Beilin: No secret talks with Palestinians on Jerusalem

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Israel's minister in charge of the Middle East peace process denied on Monday that secret talks had been held in Sweden with Palestinian leaders on the status of Jerusalem.

"I cannot speak on behalf of all Israelis but I don't think that something like that is taking place," said Yossi Beilin, in response to an article published in the Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet.

The article said that two Israeli negotiators who had been involved in the secret talks that led to the historic 1993 peace accord signed between Israel and the Palestinians were recently in Stockholm to meet with Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat.

The daily added that former Swedish Foreign Minister Sten Andersson was hosting the talks. But Mr. Beilin denied the report saying he did not see the need to hold secret talks

when relations between the two sides were good.

"When we can meet in Jerusalem and nobody is following us and there is no big fuss, there is no need to meet elsewhere," he said.

Mr. Beilin was in Stockholm on Monday to meet with government officials on the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Arafat was expected here on Tuesday to hold similar talks and to attend a prize ceremony.

Mr. Beilin also said peace talks between Israel and Syria are making good progress but their current pace "is not enough."

"The current pace is not enough. But I'm still optimistic about the possibility of making peace with Syria in the coming months," Mr. Beilin said.

Mr. Beilin, who spoke after meeting with Swedish Coordination Minister Jan Nygren and Development Minister Pierre Schori, said

he was optimistic about the second round of Israeli-Syrian peace talks in Maryland, which begin Monday.

"I hope that in this complex in Maryland, and with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, it will be possible to enhance the peace process," he said.

Mr. Christopher will return to the Middle East next week.

"There are some very encouraging developments in the negotiations. The atmosphere is much better than before, much less formal and the media is much more favourable," he said.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Monday the Arab-Israeli peace process no longer needs prodding forward because it is now moving all on its own.

"The peace process does not need a push. It is moving on its own momentum now,"

(Continued on page 3)

Hostages freed in Yemen; 'kind' kidnappers detained

SANAA (AFP) — Seventeen French tourists were set free Monday by tribesmen who held them hostage for four days at an isolated Yemeni village but who were "kind" and left them with souvenirs of their adventure.

Security forces later arrested four of the Al-Aslam tribesmen "without firing a single shot" and were hunting for 14 accomplices, Interior Minister Hussein Arab said.

The hostages were released after authorities "put pressure on the kidnappers" and refused to meet their demand that the government release a jailed member of their tribe, Colonel Arab said.

He said the four arrested would stand trial and that the authorities would increase security for tourists.

The group was treated well by the kidnappers who never threatened to harm them, one of the freed hostages, Jean Jacques Abassin, told reporters on arriving here af-

ter a six-hour trip from remote parts of eastern Yemen. "At no time were we in danger. We were treated like guests. They gave us food and water," Mr. Abassin, 65, said, holding a rifle which was given to each tourist by their kidnappers.

Another freed hostage, 64-year-old Odette Gayard, said although the kidnappers "were very kind" the group had to sleep on mattresses in one room at a house in a remote village.

There was a lack of toilets there, but she managed to take a shower twice, and the group listened to French radio and did not have to fast during the day like their kidnappers who observed the Holy Month of Ramadan.

"We don't hold any grudge against them. It was part of our holiday," she said.

The mainly elderly tourists were abducted on Thursday as they returned by bus to Sanaa from a sightseeing tour

to Maarib province. They were kept in the remote village of Ain Hadi, 450 kilometres east of Sanaa.

Their captors even gave them a guided tour of eastern Yemen while they were held, as well as souvenir daggers.

Yemeni Culture Minister Yahya Al-Aarshi said "they will remember these days as among the best during their visit to Yemen."

In Paris, French foreign ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said: "We thank the Yemeni authorities for the help they gave to the happy outcome of this case."

France did not take part in the hostage negotiations, he added.

The tribesmen had tried to win the release of a fellow tribe member, Zebnallah Duman, jailed three months ago for abducting a U.S. national last September.

Officials said they had

(Continued on page 3)



ANGUISH OVER MISSING: Bosnian Muslim women weep as they demonstrate in the north-western Bosnian town of Tuzla on Saturday against the continued silence over the fate of about 100,000 Bosnian Muslim males who have been missing since the fall of Srebrenica to Bosnian Serbs in July. (AFP photo)

ICRC campaigns for release of all Bosnia prisoners

SARAJEVO (R) — The Red Cross (ICRC) Sarajevo chief Beat Schweizer told a news conference 63 were being held as suspected war criminals — as permitted by the Dayton peace agreement.

But another 49 were still held in breach of the commitments made by Bosnia's Muslim-led government, Serbs and Croats.

The rival factions freed more than 500 prisoners over the weekend, well behind the Jan. 19 deadline agreed at the peace negotiations in Dayton, Ohio, in November.

In northwestern Bosnia North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) peacekeepers fought against bad weather in an attempt to reach three British soldiers presumed killed by a landmine on Sunday.

A NATO description of the destruction of the Spartan

armoured vehicle, which blundered onto an apparently unmarked minefield while on routine patrol, left little hope that the men could have survived.

The detonation of the mine underneath the tracked vehicle sparked a fire which in turn lit the ammunition stored inside on fire," a spokesman said.

"Explosives and ordnance experts and medical units could not approach the vehicle because of ... exploding ordnance and the fire inside the Spartan."

If confirmed, the deaths will bring to eight the number of soldiers from the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) killed since they began deploying in Bosnia in December.

A Swedish peacekeeper drowned and another two were injured when their armoured vehicle careered into a river in northeastern Bosnia on Sunday.

Despite the end of the war, NATO personnel still face a residual threat from snipers, as illustrated by the shot which grazed the neck of a

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Israel to freeze Ethiopian blood pending inquiry

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The government moved Monday to defuse the uproar created by its policy of discarding blood donated by Israel's Ethiopian Jews, saying all Ethiopian blood would be kept in cold storage pending the outcome of an official inquiry into the affair.

Revelations that the government secretly but systematically threw out blood donations by the Ethiopian community for fear it may be contaminated by AIDS sparked unprecedented rioting here Sunday outside the prime minister's office in which scores of Ethiopian protesters and police were injured.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres ordered an official commission of inquiry to look into the blood scandal and other complaints of discrimination against the Ethiopians, who claim they are being shunned by white Israeli society (See page 2).

Health Minister Ephraim Sneh said Monday that all Ethiopian blood donations would be frozen pending the outcome of the commission's investigation.

He said the inquiry was

expected to last about one month.

"There needs to be a verification process and that is why at this time we will no longer throw out the blood samples," he said.

Mr. Peres meanwhile met Monday with government immigration and integration officials to discuss the blood issue and other Ethiopian complaints of discrimination in education, housing and the workplace, state radio reported.

"These people were very much hurt by this situation and society must help them," Mr. Peres told the radio.

Israeli health officials defended the earlier policy of discarding Ethiopians' blood donations by arguing that the rate of infection by the HIV virus which causes AIDS among the community is 40 to 50 times that of the general Israeli population.

But experts questioned the government figures, noting that as recent immigrants, the Ethiopians underwent systematic blood tests not carried out on other Israelis.

Other observers noted that the rate of AIDS contamination

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Iraq-U.N. talks start on Feb. 6

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Talks between the United Nations and Iraq on an oil-for-food scheme will begin in New York on Feb. 6, U.N. spokeswoman Sylvana Foa said on Monday.

Her announcement followed Iraq's agreement on Jan. 19 to begin negotiations about a plan to permit it to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to buy badly-needed food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies.

The U.N. negotiators will be headed by U.N. legal counsel Hans Corell, a Swede. Iraq's team will be led by Abdul Anwar Al-Anbari, Iraq's ambassador to the Paris-based U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

He is an oil industry expert and was Iraq's ambassador at the United Nations during the Gulf war.

Iraq's economy has been devastated by sanctions imposed by the Security Council in August 1990, a few days after Iraqi troops marched into Kuwait.

Baghdad had hitherto spurned the oil-for-food scheme, embodied in council Resolution 986 of April 1995, and a similar plan first approved by the council in 1991.

It said U.N. monitoring of any oil sales and of the distribution of civilian supplies bought with the proceeds would infringe on its sovereignty. The oil resolu-

tion may be renewed after six months if the Security Council is satisfied with the initial trial run.

Resolution 986, allows Baghdad to export up to \$1 billion of oil per quarter in exchange for food and medicine under strict international control.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali is concerned about the "desperate humanitarian situation in Iraq," according to spokeswoman Foa.

She said that according to the World Food Programme, four million people, or one fifth of the Iraqi population, were "at severe nutritional risk" as a result of the sanctions.

Food prices in Iraq have been slashed by half since the Jan. 19 announcement that Baghdad was finally ready to discuss the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

The price of a kilogram of rice went down to 500 dinars on Thursday, from 750 dinars on Friday. Sugar sold for 550 dinars a kilo, down from 1,400 last week, and a litre of vegetable oil cost 1,250 dinars, compared to 1,900.

Adding to the air of confidence in Baghdad, the dinar has risen against the dollar since the announcement that the oil-for-food talks would take place.

(Iraq sees success, page 2)

ROYAL JORDANIAN المملكة الاردنية الهاشمية

Announcement

Royal Jordanian has the pleasure to announce the introduction of a new service the "Advance Boarding Pass" at its Intercon. Housing Bank and Abdali offices. It is also available at its offices in Zarka and Irbid.

This "ABP" service allows RJ passengers to receive their Boarding Passes, seat assignments and pay their Airport Tax at RJ offices within (24) hours and until (3) hours prior to departure time.

This service applies to the following destinations: New York, Chicago, London, Berlin, Frankfurt and Amsterdam.

Iraqis see success in U.N. oil talks

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqis are optimistic that their oil will soon be flowing onto world markets, bringing medicine and food to the country's impoverished people after more than five years of U.N. sanctions.

Hopes were raised last week after Iraqi Oil Minister Amir Rasheed told a public hearing for any news on oil that he saw light at the end of the tunnel.

"In the case of exports, we are optimistic. Then God willing the oil ministry will carry out its duty, namely the export of oil," Mr. Rasheed said on television.

Iraqis already knew their government had accepted a U.N. offer to enter talks to allow Baghdad oil sales of \$2 billion every six months to pay for urgent humanitarian needs.

But Mr. Rasheed's comments assured them that Iraq's oil industry, devastated in the 1991 Gulf war, was largely restored and capable of pumping two million barrels per day (bpd) to international markets.

Mr. Rasheed said Iraq's export routes through Turkey and the Gulf port of Mina Al Bakr were ready to handle the outflow but doubted whether the United Nations would ever allow Baghdad to export as much as two million bpd.

Diplomats interpreted his remarks as meaning Iraq would be able to export

enough oil to meet the \$2 billion target even if crude prices slumped to as low as \$10 a barrel.

The official sense of optimism over Iraq's return to the oil markets is mirrored in the streets of Baghdad. Its markets are crisscrossed with shoppers filling their baskets with goods after prices slumped on rumours of the oil talks.

The possibility of Iraq selling oil again has boosted the value of the dinar currency, bringing the prices of dollar-denominated imports tumbling down.

Baghdad traders are opening up their warehouses and selling at prices that would have been unthinkable two weeks ago.

Zuheir Abdul Ghafur Yunis, chairman of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce, predicted a further surge in the value of the dinar which is trading at around 1,000 to the dollar compared with 3,000 earlier this month.

In a newspaper interview, Mr. Yunis urged Iraqis to halt their shopping as the prices of essential goods and commodities were bound to fall further.

The ruling Baath Party newspaper drove a similar message home in a commentary on Monday.

"We do not want to anticipate political developments, but we can say without hesitation this is the beginning of the end for the embargo," it said.

Iraq lacks 'political will' to normalise ties - Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Monday accused Iraq of lacking the political will to normalise ties some eight years after the end of their bitter 1980-1988 war.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Khorram proposed in an interview with Kayhan International newspaper that implementing the "good neighbourly" treaty struck in 1975 between the two countries could "open the way for a total peace."

"We do not trust Iraqi leaders very much... as they declared the treaty null and attacked Iran" in 1980, he said.

"They can restore the confidence by fully implementing the treaty, which Iraq said it would accept anew after its invasion of Kuwait" in August 1990.

In any case, "we still do not see a strong political will

on Iraq's part for a rapprochement," said Mr. Khorram, who spearheads his country's efforts to normalise relations with Iraq.

He charged that conciliatory statements from Baghdad towards Tehran were "merely a tactical move to prompt the West to lift its sanctions" against Iraq.

The official added that no new date had been set for an eventual visit to Iraq by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. The trip has been postponed three times to the past two years and cancelled each time.

Mr. Khorram said however that the two countries had "made some progress" on the question of the prisoners-of-war and missing-in-action, which Iran has demanded to be tackled ahead of a normalisation.

Shbeilat remains the only serious contender to JEA presidency so far

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Until Monday evening, there were no strong nominations for the presidency of the Jordanian Engineers Association (JEA) other than its current president Leith Shbeilat, who is being held for less majestic charges.

According to Mr. Shbeilat's lawyer Jawad Yunis, Mr. Shbeilat insists on his candidacy in the elections expected to be held on Feb. 9 even if the court issued a ruling in his case before the elections.

"It is a matter of principle," Mr. Yunis said.

The two major forces within the association, the Islamist and the nationalist blocs, had not nominated candidates for the presidency until Monday evening. The Islamist

Action Front Party insists on leaving its options open and says that it will field a candidate before the closing day for nomination on Thursday. The nationalist bloc, known as the Green Bloc, is not expected to field any candidate.

The only candidates who nominated themselves for the post are independents who do not have the backing of either of the two main blocs.

The candidates are: Abdul Fattah Tougan and Na'el Isteitieh. But, observers believe they could not be considered as strong opponents to Mr. Shbeilat, known as an opposition figure and an ardent opponent of normalisation of Jordan's relations with Israel.

However, the Islamist stream within the association led by the Islamic Action

Front is concentrating mainly on fielding strong candidates for the vice-presidency, according to leading IAF member Ali Abul Sukkar. The IAF also expects to win an overwhelming majority in the elections of the seven-member JEA council.

According to JEA law, the council has the power to elect the vice-president as president if the latter's seat was "vacant."

Islamists had fielded until now five candidates for the post of vice-president. Observers believe that the IAF will finally decide on Husni Abu Ghaidha, who enjoys wide popularity. Mr. Abu Ghaidha, an independent Islamist but backed by the IAF movement, ran for the presidency in 1994 elections but lost against Mr. Shbeilat.

Death toll goes up in Mogadishu violence

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Some 31 people were killed and 60 others wounded during Sunday's factional fighting here, hospital sources said Monday, and appealed for emergency medical help to treat the casualties.

The violence, in north Mogadishu, pitted militiamen belonging to factional leader Ali Mahdi Mohamud's Abgal clan, against fighters of the Murusade sub-clan, which supports Somalia's self-declared "president" Mohammad Farah Aidede.

Mogadishu was calm but tense on Monday, as rival militiamen patrolled the "green line" which divides Mr. Mahdi's north Mogadishu and General Aidede's fiefdom in the south.

Hospitals complained of lack of medicine, especially antibiotics, bandages and vitamin K tablets.

Sunday's fighting was the worst violent confrontation between the Abgal and the Murusade militiamen, led by Mohammad Qanyare Afrah, "interior minister" in Gen. Aidede's self-styled government, since September.

Dubai hosts unprecedented cultural events in festival

DUBAI (AFP) — Dubai has invited orchestras, theatre troupes and musicians from Europe, the Middle East and Asia to the six-week Dubai shopping festival starting on Feb. 15.

The Dubai International Congress Centre will open its doors for the first time to the Moscow State Philharmonic Orchestra, British cellist Julian Lloyd Webber and the St. Petersburg Ballet.

Also attending the Feb. 15 to March 28 festival are U.S. pop violinist Vanessa Mae, Arab singer Warda and Lebanon's musical theatre troupe Caracalla, organisers said.

Caracella will perform from Feb. 28 to March 2, Julian Lloyd Webber on March 4-5. The Moscow State Philharmonic Orchestra with Vladimir Ponkin conducting will appear March 6-7.

Vanessa Mae will stage a concert on March 17-18. The St. Petersburg Ballet will perform sometime in March.

In addition, 30 of Walt Disney's cartoon characters will meet with the public from Feb. 19-21.

Set to coincide with the festival are such annual sports events as the ATP Dubai Tennis Open Tournament from Feb. 15-18 and the

Greece, Turkey lock horns

ATHENS (R) — Greece issued a stern warning to Turkey on Monday, saying it would not hesitate to defend its territory after a flag dispute over an Aegean rock island fuelled tension between the two North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) members.

"Our response to this and any other aggressive nationalism is that Greece's reaction will be strong, immediate and effective," Prime Minister Costas Simitis said in a statement. "We have the means and we will use them without hesitation."

In Ankara, Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller rejected accusations by Athens that Ankara has an eye on Greek territory in the Aegean Sea.

"I openly declare that Greek allegations suggesting Turkey wants some Greek lands (in the Aegean) are totally untrue," Ms. Ciller told a meeting of her True Path Party's parliamentary group.

The latest dispute between the two countries is over the ownership of an islet in the Aegean Sea, off Bodrum in southwest Turkey, and is an issue of symbolic importance for both countries.

Tension mounted over the weekend between Athens and Ankara after Greek officials and Turkish journalists planted flags of their respective countries on the islet of Imia (Kardak).

Ms. Ciller accused Greece of trying to claim the islet by "a fait accompli" and said her country would disregard any such move.

Her office on Monday also summoned Greek Ambassador Dimitrios Nezeritis to discuss the dispute.

Ankara claims that several of the islets in the Aegean, including Kardak, which lies off the Turkish coast, belong to Turkey.

The dispute over the islets is the latest in a string of conflicts between the two countries, which are at odds over the island of Cyprus and drilling rights in the Aegean.

Greece and Turkey argued last year over whether Athens has the right to extend its territorial waters in the Aegean from six miles to 12.

Athens says two international treaties prove the islet of Imia is Greek and Mr. Simitis said Monday the incident was part of a tactic by Turkish nationalists to cause tension with Greece whenever Turkish internal politics were unstable.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said earlier Monday that dispute with Greece over the islet should be resolved peacefully through diplomatic talks.

"We believe that all problems existing between Greece and Turkey, including this (islet) dispute, should be settled peacefully and through negotiations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Omer Akbel told a briefing.

Asked whether or not there was tension between the Turkish and the Greek navies in the area, Mr. Akbel said, "This is something we want to avoid."

"Still, such acts of fait accompli by Greece will bear no consequences in the face of international law," Mr. Akbel added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Gunmen kill policeman in Istanbul

ANKARA (AFP) — Suspected extreme leftist gunmen shot and killed a Turkish police officer in an attack in Istanbul early Monday, the Anatolia news agency reported. It quoted witnesses as saying that two assailants sprayed the police officer with bullets in Istanbul's Asian district of Umraniye before fleeing the area. Umraniye is the site of a special prison where four extreme left-wing inmates linked to the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Force were killed in a clash with security forces during a riot earlier this month. Security officials said they suspected Monday's killing might be a revenge operation by People's Front militants. The group, formerly known as Revolutionary left or Dev-Sol, is Turkey's deadliest urban guerrilla group which has killed scores of policemen, several retired officers and a former justice minister since the late 1980s.

Qatari ruler amnesties 98 prisoners

DOHA (AFP) — Qatari ruler Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, granted an amnesty Sunday to 98 prisoners in jail for financial crimes to mark the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, the official news agency QNA reported. The prisoners were convicted for fines they could not pay, the agency said, which generally refers to people imprisoned for writing cheques that bounce. It is the second amnesty decreed by Sheikh Hamad since he ousted his father, Sheikh Khalifa Ben Hamad Al Thani, in a bloodless coup last June.

Financial crime rises in Kuwait — report

KUWAIT (R) — Financial crime in Kuwait rose by a third in the first 11 months of 1995 compared to the whole of calendar 1994, the Arab Times newspaper said on Monday. Government figures showed 3,577 incidents of financial crime between January and November 1995 compared to 2,666 between January and December 1994, a rise of 34 per cent, the daily said. It said figures for December 1995 were still being compiled. The newspaper gave no breakdown of the offences. The Interior Ministry said it was checking the report. The rise in financial crime helped push up overall figures for serious crime in the country to 7,988 incidents in the first 11 months of 1995 compared to 7,315 in the whole of 1994, a nine per cent rise, the newspaper said. Kuwaitis made up 59.5 per cent of all those convicted of serious crime in 1995, with expatriates making up the rest.

Egypt to host festival for 'Alexandria'

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian city of Alexandria is planning an international festival for all towns with the same name from around the world in a bid to promote tourism to the ancient city, organisers said on Sunday. "There are around 44 towns and cities throughout the world named Alexandria and we are inviting them all," Jihan Al Shafie, production assistant for the Alexandria World Festival, told AFP. "Each town will send its mayors with a delegation to show everything about their city, its clothes and food and customs." Ms. Shafie said. Most of the world's "Alexandrias" are in the United States. In Europe the biggest town of that name is Alessandria in Italy. At least 26 towns are expected to attend the festival which begins in September, Ms. Shafie said. It will showcase a production of Verdi's opera Otello, directed by the Italian Franco Zeparelli and starring Placido Domingo who have both agreed to attend, she said. The festival, proposed by the mayor of Alexandria, was first held in 1992, "but it did not attract much attention. This year the programme has been greatly expanded," Ms. Shafie said.

Liberals to participate in Iran election

TEHRAN (AFP) — The main liberal opposition in Iran has reversed an earlier decision and will field candidates in March legislative elections, the group's leader told AFP on Monday. Ebrahim Yazdi of the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI) said several members of the group which is banned but tolerated would run for the March 8 polls. The hopefuls will however register for the vote "under their own names, not the group," he said. The LMI, which spouses liberal democratic views, announced its participation in the upcoming votes earlier this month, but later said it had withdrawn its candidates under government pressure. Mr. Yazdi, a foreign minister in the interim government which emerged after the 1979 Islamic revolution, has been serving as LMI's general secretary since the death last year of Mehdi Bazargan, a former prime minister. Another opposition group, the ultra-nationalist Party of the People of Iran headed by Daryoosh Foruhar, has said it would boycott the election.

Sudan raises petrol prices 13 per cent

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's Finance Minister Abdalla Hassan Ahmad has raised the price of petrol by 13 per cent to 1,700 pounds (\$1.7) a gallon from 1,500 pounds, the Khartoum newspaper Al Rai Al Akher reported on Monday. The privately-owned daily said the price of gas would also be increased by 20 per cent and that diesel would be rationed to five gallons a week for private cars and pickups. Sudan, seeking to patch up its war-wrecked economy and battling runaway inflation, last raised fuel prices just three months ago. The country is dependent on imports for its fuel needs but suffers a critical lack of foreign currency and petrol and gas shortages are common.

AIDS scandal final straw for Falashas in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli government's policy of refusing blood donations from Ethiopian Jews for fear of AIDS has violently brought to the surface the discrimination felt by this community as it struggles to integrate into its new homeland.

"It is because we are black," said Asmara Askalash, a 23-year-old mother of two who lives in a camp for new immigrants on a hill south of Jerusalem.

"They did not even check to see if the blood was contaminated, the colour of our skin was enough," Ms. Askalash said.

Her fury was shared by thousands of other Ethiopian Jews who tried to break into Prime Minister Shimon Peres' office on Sunday to protest the official discrimination.

Police fired rubber bullets and teargas into the crowd during the three-hour dis-

turbances which left 22 demonstrators and 40 policemen injured.

An Ethiopian community leader, Addisu Messele, warned afterwards of an explosion in violence in Israel. "Next time will be much more violent. There will be more bloodshed and it's the government of Shimon Peres who will be responsible for the catastrophe."

The Maariv newspaper broke the news last week that the health ministry was systematically destroying blood donations provided by Ethiopian Jews in Israel, fearing they contained the virus causing Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

But the donors were never informed that their blood was being discarded.

Abi Reuben, 54, who like Ms. Askalash lives in the compound of trailers set up for the recently arrived immigrants from Ethiopia, said: "My son is doing his military

service. He had to give blood several times, like his colleagues, but now he is ashamed."

"They consider us to be inferior, like imbeciles," said Mr. Reuben's wife, Teruya, 36. "The doctors could have told us. I didn't know there were racist among Jews."

"It's my duty to protect my fellow citizens," Seneb was quoted by the Maariv newspaper as saying.

Mr. Messele said the blood scandal was a severe blow to 60,000-strong Ethiopian community's attempt at integration in Israel, which has suffered from difficulties in obtaining employment and education.

"Our assimilation has already been difficult. But we are as Jewish as the others in this country, which claims to be enlightened," Mr. Messele said.

"We are all brothers by blood. But our blood they throw in the trash," he said.

The Ethiopian Jews, celebrated as one of the "lost tribes of Israel," were brought into the Jewish state with great fanfare in two airlifts organised in 1985 and 1991.

But they have since repeatedly complained of discrimination in the job market, schooling, the army and from religious authorities. Unemployment among Ethiopians runs at 20 per cent, compared to a national average of eight per cent.

With tears in her eyes, Ms. Askalash said: "At school, my children are constantly taunted by their white schoolmates because they are black."

Amnon Ben David, director of the state-run Israeli blood bank, vehemently denied that blood screening was racially based: "Our decision was based exclusively on professional considerations," he said.

"For us, the blood of

Ethiopian Jews has to be treated like that of homosexuals and drug addicts," he said.

A senior official at the ministry of health, who requested anonymity, said that 1,300 people in Israel have been infected with the Human immune-deficiency virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, and half of them are Ethiopians.

He added that 250 of the 350 people who have contracted AIDS in Israel are Ethiopians.

But he added that the whole issue had been poorly handled.

"This affair threatens to have serious political repercussions ahead of general elections," which are expected before the end of the year, he said.

"We handled the issue poorly by giving the impression that blood from blacks was worse than whites," he added.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 72111-14	
PROGRAMME TWO	
14:00	Caplan Planet
14:30	Jimmy Quest
14:50	Spirit of Adventure
15:40	Scientific Eye
16:30	Viewpoint
17:00	Only
17:15	Children Programme — Copids
17:30	Scene — Les Compagnons de L'Avanture
18:00	Medical Magazine — Savoir Plus
19:00	Magazine — L'Esprit
19:15	Magazine — L'Esprit
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	You Bet Your Life
20:00	Div. — Oriental Rugs
20:25	Div. — Ibbawi Fincel
21:10	99-1 (Police Drama)
22:00	News in English
22:25	10 Take Manhattan (EP. 3)
23:15	Feature Film: "Prime Target"
PRAYER TIMES	
05:07	Fajr
06:27	Sunrise/Dhuhr
11:00	Dhuhr
14:05	Asr
17:11	Maghrib
18:30	Isha

CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetfeth, Tel. 810141	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 627345	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 623591	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637430	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terresanta Church Tel. 622366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 623026	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773551	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian International Church Tel. 625226	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 823328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 815457	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 634032	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Balkans supplied by the Department of Meteorology	
Temperatures are expected to rise with winds, moderate in Amman, moderate weather conditions	

GUIDE AND CALENDAR

RJ Flight Information 06-53281
 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53281

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
 of Hussein Medical Centre 81381/32
 Khalifah Maternity, J. Amn 6442816
 Al-Akhil Maternity, J. Amn 623412
 Malhas Amman Maternity 642362
 Malhas, J. Amman 636140
 Palestine, Shamsan 647071
 Shamsan Hospital 669131
 University Hospital 638445
 Al-Mushter Hospital 6672769
 The Islamic, Abdull 66612737
 Al-Ami, Abdull 6641666
 Al-Ami, Abdull 771013
 Al-Bushri, J. Ashrafiah 77511126
 Army, Marka 8916115
 Queen Alia Hospital 666100
 Amal Hospital 667155
 The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 665199

ZARQA:
 Zarqa General Hospital 09980323
 Zarqa National Hospital 09980323
BIRZ:
 Bin Sina Hospital 09980323
 Al-Hama Modern Hospital 09980323

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
 This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 09980323, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
 04:05 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
 06:00 Jeddah (RJ)
 06:30 Damascus (RJ)
 07:30 Aqaba (RJ)
 09:00 Aqaba (RJ)
 09:25 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
 10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
 10:15 Beirut (RJ)
 10:25 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
 10:30 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
 10:45 London, Frankfurt (RJ)
 01:45 Jakarta, New Delhi (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
 11:15 Aden, Hududah (DY)
 14:20 Rome (AZ)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN	
Dep. Amman	8:40 every Monday
Arr. Damascus	
Dep. Damascus	5:30 p.m. every Monday
Arr. Amman	
Dep. Amman	7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman	5:30 p.m. every Sunday
MARKET PRICES	
Upper/lower price in lbs per kg.	
Apple	700/500
Banana	620/520
Banana (Mukammal)	560/500
Banana (Imperforated)	600/500
Cabbage	200/150
Carrot	200/150
Cauliflower	130/80
Cucumbers (large)	180/120
Cucumbers (small)	350/210
Eggplant	200/120
Ginger	100/80
Grass Fruit	100/80
Lemon	330/210
Marrow (large)	140/100
Marrow (small)	240/180
Onion (large)	220/150
Onion (small)	160/120
Orange	600/400
Pepper (hot)	400/300
Pepper (sweet)	400/300
Radish	210/160
Shring Beans	620/500
Spanish	160/120
Tomato	120/80



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein on Monday hosts an iftar banquet in honour of citizens from the governorates of Mafrqa, Zarqa and Jerash. The iftar was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal and Prince Ali, Royal Court Chief Marwan Qasem, the King's advisors, the King's Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, King Hussein's Cultural Secretary Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's Private Advisor Mohammad Saqqaf, Prince Mir'ed Ben Raad and the Royal Court's Secretary General. King Hussein and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together (Petra photo)

U.S. to start 1997 immigrant visa lottery programme — USIS

AMMAN (J.T.) — The U.S. government recently announced a visa lottery programme under which a specific number of permanent resident visas will be awarded in 1997 to eligible persons from areas of the world that have low immigration rates to the United States, a U.S. Information Service (USIS) statement said Monday.

The visas awarded to winners in the draw will be apportioned among six geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania and South America, the statement said.

Applications will be chosen at random by computer, and winners will be notified by mail at the address listed on their entry no later than July 1, 1996, it said.

After this notification by mail, winners will be eligible to apply for immigrant visas at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, according to

the statement.

The usual criteria for granting immigrant visas apply, it added.

Following are the instructions to apply for participation in the programme as stated in the USIS statement.

— To participate in the lottery, applicants must have at least a high school education or its equivalent or two years of work experience within the past five years in an occupation that requires at least two years of training or experience.

— If an applicant wins in the draw and is so notified but cannot later demonstrate that he/she fulfils this requirement, the applicant will be disqualified.

— Applications must be received at the correct address in the United States by regular airmail between February 12, 1996 through March 12,

1996.

— Any entry received before or after this period and entries sent to an address other than those listed on the instruction sheet will be void and will not participate in the random computer selection.

— Only one entry for each applicant may be submitted; duplicate or multiple entries will disqualify individuals from registration for this programme.

— For more detailed information on how to apply, instruction sheets on this programme will be distributed at the front gate of the U.S. embassy beginning (today) Jan. 30, 1996, from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

— Please do not call the American embassy in Amman regarding the special immigrant visa programme. Telephone inquiries about the programme will not be taken and applications sent to this embassy will be destroyed.

New income tax exemptions go into effect this month

AMMAN (Petra) — Workers throughout the country will receive higher paychecks starting this month as a result of amendments to the Income Tax Law which went into effect on Jan. 1, 1996.

According to the new regulations, half of the total annual wages of a worker will be exempted from income tax and an additional JD 1000 for the head of household, JD 500 for the spouse, and JD 500 for each of the dependents.

Prior to the amendments, the exemption was 25 per cent for the worker plus JD 400 as a personal exemption and JD 200 each for the

wife and other dependents.

A private sector, married employee with three children, for example, whose annual income was JD 3,200 used to pay JD 100 under the law prior to the amendments. Under the new regulations, this employee will pay no income tax.

Likewise a worker earning JD 6,000 annually and married with three children used to pay JD 320 in annual income tax. Under the new regulations he too will pay no income tax.

The government last year introduced a package of laws which entailed sharp reductions in income tax causing nearly JD 45 million in lost revenues for the government. But at the same time the government passed a law amending the Sales Tax Law raising the tax from seven per cent to 10 per cent on imported and locally manufactured goods and services. The increase, was aimed at compensating for the lost revenues in income tax.

Also under the amended Income Tax Law, a head of household will receive annual exemptions from income tax amounting to JD 1,500 for every child studying in college. The law will also make surgery conducted in Jordan or abroad tax deductible.

GUVS president says there are 400,000 disabled in Kingdom

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A veteran social worker on Monday rejected the findings of a survey carried out by the Department of Statistics on the number of disabled Jordanians.

The survey found that the number of disabled was 46,940, but President of the General Union for Voluntary Societies (GUVS) Abdullah Khatib said the actual number was 400,000.

Dr. Khatib described the findings as inaccurate, saying that it did not reflect under any circumstances the actual number of the Kingdom's disabled.

"We (GUVS) are sure and know for a fact that the number of disabled in Jordan is around 400,000," Dr.

Khatib told the Jordan Times.

According to international figures, 10 per cent of the Jordanian population are disabled. International organisations specialised in caring for the disabled state that 10 per cent of the population of any country are disabled, and the percentage of disabilities is higher than 10 per cent in developing countries.

According to the survey carried out by the Jordanian Department of Statistics along with the general population census for 1994, only 1.3 per cent of the Jordanian population suffer from one form of disability or another. The number of disabled Jordanians are 46,940, based on the survey findings, which also found there are seven handicapped Jordanians for

every 100 family.

Dr. Khatib dismissed the survey as unrealistic and added that such "inaccurate" conclusions were expected, because the questionnaire was faulty.

The questionnaire had the following question: "Does your family have a sick member?" which according to Dr. Khatib does not categorise the form of disability or the actual number of disabled.

"It is well known in Jordan that people do not declare disabilities in the family," he said. A disability is "considered a social stigma."

GUVS, which sponsors 65 centres for the disabled all over the Kingdom, requested the Department of Statistics before it carried out the study that the questionnaire include the

definition of a disabled according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), said Dr. Khatib.

He said he did not know why the definition was not included in the questionnaire.

No immediate comment was available from the Department of Statistics.

Jordan has 110 private, governmental and non-governmental centres to help the disabled. The number of disabled Jordanians who benefit from the services of these centres are 10,000, according to GUVS statistics.

"We have long waiting lists for the disabled whose families are willing to give them some sort of help, but the centres cannot offer them services because of limited resources," said Dr. Khatib.

Committee continues to monitor Gulf crisis compensation applications, says minister

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Labour Nader Ahul Shaer Monday told members of a higher committee charged with following up on the applications of Jordanians to the U.N. Compensation Committee that the government is diligently pursuing efforts to secure the largest possible compensation for its citizens' who were forced to flee the Gulf region during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

The minister said the government and the higher committee will continue their efforts through the permanent Jordanian delegation to the Geneva-based United Nations offices.

According to Dr. Abul Shaer, while the compensation applications of private citizens and firms are being handled by the higher committee, the public sector applications for compensation for losses incurred are being handled by a special committee based at the Ministry of Finance.

Dr. Abul Shaer explained that Jordan has not demanded compensation from any particular party involved in the Gulf crisis, but rather has submitted its demands to the U.N. Committee on Compensation in Implementation of Security Council Resolutions.

During Monday's meeting, the higher committee reviewed progress made on the applications for compensation and said it had secured some payment for those who had sustained serious bodily injuries or died between Aug. 2, 1990 and March 2, 1991.

TCC to announce tender for installation of Abdali international exchange

AMMAN (Petra) — The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) Monday said it will soon announce a tender for the installation of an international exchange at Abdali and the expansion of telephone services in several regions in the country.

Following a TCC board of directors meeting, Minister of Post and Communications Jamal Sarairoh said the board decided to modernise several existing French-made electronic exchanges to help meet growing demand for telephone services.

He said the board endorsed agreements reached with Siemens, a German electronic firm, last October, to install modern digital telephone exchanges in several regions of Jordan at a cost



Jamal Sarairoh

of JD 26 million.

The minister said the board also approved a tender to establish telephone networks for the following villages: Maghir Sarhan, Nadera, Sabha, Ba'ieg, Qasem, Um Qutein, Um

Jimal, Rnweished, Safawi Ashraieh, Ramlet Ghazi, Deir Kahf and Hammad in Mafrqa Governorate. The JD 97,000 tender was awarded to a local firm, Mr. Sarairoh said.

In addition, the TCC board approved a project to set up a telephone network for three villages around Amman, he said, adding that the JD 54,000 project will also be carried out by a local firm.

Last September the minister announced that modernisation of part of the telecommunications sector will be carried out in 1996.

The TCC will undertake several projects under the comprehensive upgrading programme of communications services by the year 2008 at a total cost of \$1.067 billion.

Hostages freed in Yemen

(Continued from page 1)

reached an agreement with the kidnappers to release the tourists — who included 13 women and a couple in their 80s — without conditions during negotiations near 'Ain Hadi.

The governor of Maarib province, Abdul Wali Al Shamiri, told AFP that 1,000 security forces had surrounded the five villages in which the 2,000-strong Al Aslam tribe live and pointed their guns at inhabitants.

"They used the policy of

the carrot and the stick" to get the hostages released, Mr. Shamiri said.

The government refused to release Mr. Duman because he is suspected of gun running and smuggling cars and electronic goods from Saudi Arabia, security sources said, accusing the kidnappers of also being involved.

But Mr. Shamiri said he had "promised the tribe that if the hostages were freed the government would tell the judicial authorities to recon-

sider the imprisonment of Duman," who was due for release shortly in any case.

Tribesmen have frequently kidnapped foreign workers and tourists to make demands on the government such as the release of members from jail, compensation for oil projects on their land or road improvements.

Some 50 foreigners have been seized in 16 separate abductions since 1992. All were released unharmed.

The latest kidnapping did not appear to have frightened a group of 10 German tourists who set off Monday for Maarib.

Beilin rules out secret talks

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Musa told journalists in Cairo.

"There is a need now for coordination and dialogue about what is happening and the coming stages," Mr. Musa said.

"There is no call for excessive optimism. But there is optimism from everything we hear and see from all parties,

including Syria, which has accepted the peace process, even in matters such as naturalisation" with Israel, he said.

"There are important and dangerous matters, such as security and (defining) borders. Upcoming contacts will reveal the framework" for Syria and Israel to discuss them, Mr. Musa said.

Mr. Musa said "no doubt there is need to activate" the Lebanese-Israeli track, "especially since there is no problem between Lebanon and Israel."

"Even during the rule of the (right-wing) Likud, (Israel) did not have any territorial designs on Lebanon," Mr. Musa said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Abdullah meets Korean officials

SEOUL (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah who is currently paying a working visit to South Korea, on Monday met with several senior Korean officials. Prince Abdullah met with the ministers of interior, defence and culture. At the meetings, Prince Abdullah exchanged with the officials views on various issues of common interest and means of enhancing Jordanian-Korean ties, especially in youth and sports fields. The prince also visited a Korean Special Forces base and watched military drills at the base.

Lower House to meet Wednesday

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament will hold a meeting Wednesday morning under the chairmanship of its speaker Saad Hayel Srour. The House will hear replies by Cabinet members to queries by Deputies Mustafa Shneikat, Suleiman Al Saad, Bassam Umoush and Mohammad Huneiti. It will also hear proposals by Deputy Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat on covering all day workers employed by municipal councils around the Kingdom with health insurance schemes.

Irsheidat to leave for Germany

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat will Tuesday leave for Germany on a several-day working visit. Dr. Irsheidat will hold talks with German officials on financing water projects in the peace era.

Triplets born in Aqaba

AQABA (Petra) — A 24-year-old Aqaba woman Monday gave birth to triplets at the Princess Haya Military Hospital in this port city, hospital Director Colonel Zeid Adwan announced. The mother and the babies, whose weights range between 2,100 and 2,200 grammes, were reported in good health after the caesarean operation.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

* Two films entitled: "The New Intercity Train" (in Arabic) and "Wallners Letzter Gang" (in German with Arabic subtitles) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 7:00 p.m.

* "Bouillon de Culture," (in memory of the late French Director, Louis Malle) at the French Cultural Centre at 3:00 p.m.

PLAYS

* "Between Two Jaws," at the

Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

* "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Photography and paintings of railways and trains at Goethe-Institut (until Jan. 31).

* Paintmaking and paintings by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh. Also displaying paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists

(until Feb. 18).

* Contemporary and Traditional Jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, Shmeisani (Tel. 699141) (until Jan. 31).

* Plastic (abstract) art exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina (until Feb. 6).

* Paintings by artist Raphael Chabrol at the French Cultural Centre (until Jan. 31).

Indian, Pakistani troops exchange fire for 4th day

JAMMU, India (AFP) — Indian and Pakistani troops traded fire along the Kashmir border for a fourth day Monday, but the skirmishing fuelled by a rocket attack which left 22 people dead in Pakistan lessened in intensity.

Indian defence sources said Indian and Pakistani troops at four observation posts exchanged machine gun fire intermittently throughout the night. They said the exchanges ended around dawn and resumed a couple of hours later.

The sources in this winter capital of Indian Kashmir said Pakistani Rangers had fired a total of some 15,000 rounds at Indian positions during the night, less than in previous days.

They said pickets at Mollu, Rajpura, Fagwari, Dewara in the Akhnoor sector of the heavily militarised Kashmir border, 80 kilometres northwest of here, came under attack during the night and Indian troops retaliated.

The firing was limited to machine guns and artillery, the defence sources said. Rockets or mortars were not used by either side and no casualties were reported.

"We are exercising restraint," a Indian defence spokesman said, adding that Indian troops were on "high alert." "Very tight vigilance is being maintained on the border," he added.

About 250 Muslim villagers living on the Indian side of the demarcation line fled their homes over the weekend to escape the fighting, which has left at least seven civilians wounded.

The skirmishing broke out Friday after a rocket slammed into a mosque in the border village of Kahuta in Pakistani-held Kashmir, killing 20 worshippers.

Pakistan said the rocket was fired by Indian troops while Indian officials said the mosque was accidentally hit by a rocket fired by Pakistani soldiers in an attempt to disrupt India's

Republic Day celebrations Friday.

Pakistani and Indian leaders have both downplayed the risks of the border clashes escalating into a full-fledged war between the two nuclear-capable countries.

Indian and Pakistani troops exchange fire on a near-daily basis along the line of control in Kashmir and India accused Pakistan of firing on Indian positions on some 3,000 separate occasions last year.

"I think there is no threat of war between Pakistan and India," Pakistani President Farooq Ahmed Leghari said Sunday. He added that Islamabad would "respond to consistent acts of unprovoked firing by the Indian side."

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947, two of them over Kashmir, the divided Himalayan territory claimed by both nations. India controls two-thirds of Kashmir

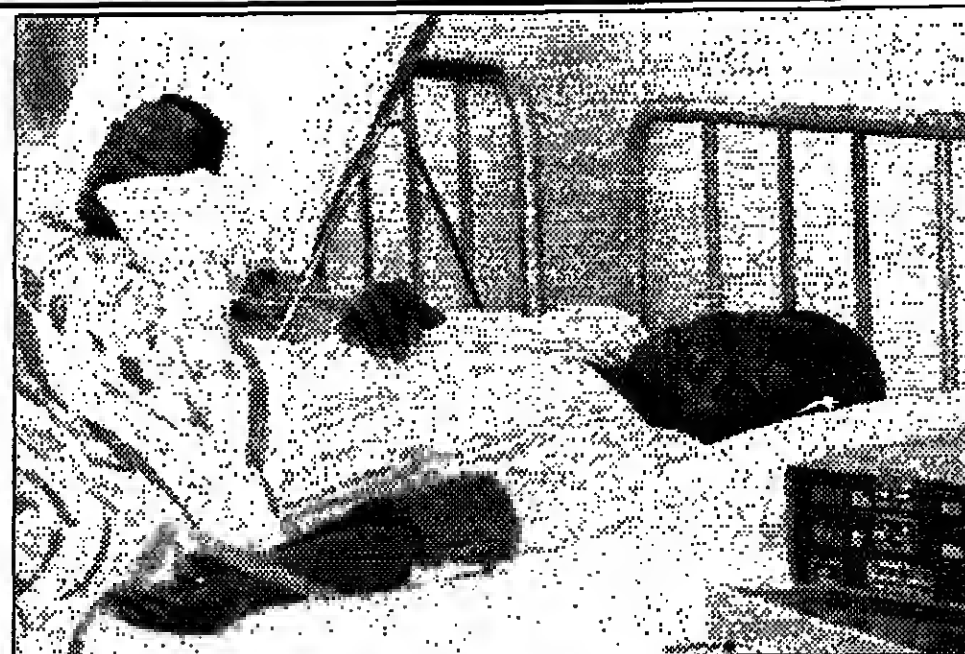
while Pakistan controls the rest.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training Muslim militants waging a violent separatist campaign in the Indian-administered portion of the northern state which has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

Pakistan denies the allegations but extends moral and diplomatic support to what it describes as a legitimate campaign for self-determination.

The traditionally tense relations between the two South Asian rivals were exacerbated over the weekend by a test by India of a mobile surface-to-surface missile.

Pakistani President Leghari said his country would take "appropriate measures" to counter the threat posed by the Prithvi missile, which was successfully tested by India Saturday.



Job seeker Buthelezi Mtshelwa lies in a hospital bed Monday after he was injured by gunmen who killed ten people and wounded at least twenty Monday. The attackers opened fire without warning on a queue of unemployed people hoping for a job at a factory at Alrode, a few kilometres from Johannesburg (Reuters photo)

Gunmen kill 10 S. African job-seekers

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South African gunmen killed 10 work-seekers and wounded at least 20 Monday in a brutal attack possibly motivated by jealousy over jobs, union officials and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) said.

"It is barbaric. The reason (for the attack) is said to be people vying for jobs eliminating each other," ANC spokeswoman Pumla Mnyeku told Reuters.

Police Superintendent Wikus Weber said several men, armed with assault rifles and handguns, opened fire on a queue outside the N F die-casting factory at Alrode, a few kilometres from the city centre just before 3 a.m. (0100 GMT).

"It was savage... We expect the death toll to rise," Mr. Weber told Reuters. He said some of the wounded were very badly hurt.

Survivor Buthelezi Mtshelwa, wounded in the chest, told reporters at a Johannesburg hospital that he had no idea why he had been shot.

"I was looking for a job, but I am not going to go

back to that place again," he said from his hospital bed.

The company, which is owned by the giant Anglo American Corporation, would not comment on a motive but said about 200 people had gathered outside the factory looking for jobs when the gunmen struck.

Union officials said the company had been on a recruiting drive and had been issuing numbered interview tickets to job-seekers.

They said some tickets had been stolen the previous week, forcing the company to re-issue tickets early Monday. The attack appeared to have aimed at deterring job-seekers, they said.

Mr. Weber said the gunmen walked up to the queue and opened fire without warning. Some of the victims, bleeding from bullet wounds, staggered up to a kilometre from the scene of the attack before collapsing.

Hours after the incident, pools of blood, discarded shoes and spent bullet casings were all the evidence left of the slaughter.

Police, who said it was too early to comment on a

motive, said the gunmen had fled on foot. Road blocks had been set up and police helicopters were searching for signs of the gunmen. Both attackers and victims were black.

Unemployment is running at about of third of South Africa's economically-active population, prompting fierce competition for work, although if the killings were jobs-related they would be the first of their kind in the post-apartheid country.

Nearly two years after South Africa's all-race elections the country is still swamped with illegal firearms, many of them AK-47 assault rifles smuggled in from Mozambique.

"We live in a society riddled with crime. We have got guns all over. It's high time people stopped killing each other," the ANC's Mnyeku said.

While political violence has slumped since the elections which brought President Nelson Mandela's ANC to power, crime is soaring with an average of 50 people, mostly blacks, murdered every day.

2nd North Korean diplomat defects to South in Lusaka

SEOUL (AFP) — A North Korean diplomat posted in Zambia followed in the footsteps of his wife and defected to the South Korean embassy in Lusaka, the Foreign Ministry here said Monday.

Hyun Sung-II, 37, a third secretary and public relations officer at the North Korean embassy in Lusaka, sought political asylum in the South after reaching the embassy on Jan. 23, a ministry spokesman said.

"His motive for the defection is political," the spokesman said.

"He is now staying in a very safe place and is scheduled to arrive in Seoul late Tuesday via a Western country," he added.

As in his wife's case, the Zambian government and the U.N.-High Commissioner for Refugees — and not the Seoul government — has already determined that Mr. Hyun's defection was genuine, he said.

Mr. Hyun is the husband of Choi Soo-Bong, who arrived in Seoul on June 16 after defecting to the South Korean embassy in Zambia.

Officials here described the defector as a member of the North's elite, the son of Hyun Chul-Kyu, the ruling Workers Party's representative in the northern province of South Hamkyong, and the nephew of Hyun Chul-Hae, a four-star general in the North Korean army in charge of rear-area logistics.

Following the defection of his wife, the North's official media quoted Hyun Sung-II as saying his wife was "deprived", and that the South Korean government had taken advantage of her depravity to entice her to defect.

Earlier, Mr. Hyun was also reported to

have tried and failed to seek asylum in the British embassy, and then reported to have made a second vain attempt to get to the South Korean embassy.

Foreign Ministry sources said Mr. Hyun, the father of two girls aged six and nine now in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, appeared to have been desperate, probably knowing that he would be punished if he returned to the North and be unable to see his daughters again.

The officials also noted that Pyongyang did not, as in the case of his wife, lodge a protest of kidnapping with the Zambian authorities.

His wife and Cha Sung-Kuo, an intelligence agent operating under the guise of a martial arts instructor to Zambia, both arrived in South Korea on Jan. 16.

The new defection coincided with the arrival here Monday of a 29-year-old man, claiming to be a North Korean trading official who smuggled himself into the country on a South Korean container ship that had left Bangkok on June 20.

The stowaway was identified as Bae In-Su, a North Korean trade official who worked in Hong Kong and Thailand, maritime officials said.

Mr. Bae said he wished to seek political asylum in South Korea on his arrival at the Southern port of Pusan.

Five North Koreans have defected to South Korea this month alone, and North Korea in turn has said that five Southerners — a former ruling party member and four people in a fishing boat, have defected to the North.

Former Colombian prosecutor shot dead amid crisis

BOGOTA (R) — Unidentified gunmen shot and killed a former prosecutor Sunday as a wave of death threats against public figures swept over Colombia amid one of the worst political crises in years.

Two gunmen riding on a motorcycle shot Felipe Lopez dead as he was loading furniture into a truck in front of his home in northern Bogota, a city police official told Reuters.

The gunmen managed to shoot Mr. Lopez three times in the head before driving off, the official said.

Mr. Lopez had worked as coordinator of the regional prosecutor-general's office in the southwestern city of Cali, home to the Cali drug cartel that is at the centre of the crisis threatening to bring down the government.

Mr. Lopez, whose body lay face-down in a pool of blood in front of his apartment building, had received death threats, the official said.

Mr. Lopez appeared to be the first person to be assassinated since a rash of death threats against journalists, business leaders and other public officials in the South American country began a few days ago.

The daily newspaper El Tiempo reported Saturday that the threats were similar to those made against Jorge Ramos, an anchor for the U.S. television network Univision, who left the country last week.

Mr. Ramos left Colombia after his Spanish-language network broadcast an interview with a former presidential aide who swore that President Ernesto Samper knew about the millions of dollars the drug cartel had contributed to his election campaign in 1994.

Other journalists have received anonymous death threats.

The revelation by former Defence Minister Fernando Botero, who was the campaign's manager, has aggravated the crisis and renewed calls for Mr. Samper's resignation.

Business leaders who signed a joint letter asking Mr. Samper to consider temporarily stepping down from office have reportedly received similar threats.

Mr. Samper's lawyer, Antonio Jose Cancino, who survived a kidnapping and assassination attempt in September, was reportedly planning to leave the country with his family because of the threats.

Killer floods threaten 100,000 in France

MONTPELLIER, France (AFP) — Floods threatened to sweep down on 100,000 people in southern France Monday as the death toll from torrential rains rose to four, authorities said.

Bernard Mooginet, prefect of the Hérault Department, said a wave of water was sweeping down local rivers "and the towns of Agde and Sérignan, on the coast, east of Beziers, are threatened."

"There is nothing we can do except evacuate people who agree to leave their homes," four hundred people were taken to safety during the night.

Mr. Mooginet said the Midi Canal was beginning to overflow.

On Monday rescue workers found the body of a nine-year-old girl who was killed with her eight-year-old brother when their mobile home was swept away. A 61-year-old woman also died when her car was washed away and two other people were missing after their vehicle was engulfed

by the waters of the Libron River.

The body of a man aged about 60 was found at Puissalico, north of Beziers, Monday two kilometres away from Magalas where witnesses saw his car being swept away Sunday night.

Overnight Sunday authorities put emergency plans into operation. Some 500 men were mobilised to help residents of the Puisseguier district where 36 divers, supported by eight vehicles and seven diving barges, sought missing people.

Some 40 children were rescued from a bus before it was submerged by the rising waters of the River Orb at Cassacou.

Lo Puisseguier itself, a village of around 2,500 inhabitants, the streets were under a metre of water which ran down from nearby hills.

In Paris, Prime Minister Alain Juppe announced plans to visit Puisseguier Monday afternoon.

Puisseguier inhabitant

Jacques Boussett said he saw floods carry away his 84-year-old uncle in his car. "The fire brigade found him this morning at three o'clock standing up in his overturned car. He spent nearly seven hours with water up to the neck."

Flood waters rose rapidly Sunday night after a violent storm. Rescuers were having difficulty moving around because many roads were cut.

In all around 100 vehicles were reported to have been swept away. Helicopters flew overhead looking for people trapped in their cars or who had taken refuge on the roofs of their houses.

Rail services were cut between Narbonne and Beziers after the line was flooded.

Heavy rains in southern Corsica also caused several rivers to burst their banks. The owners of a camp site near Porto Vecchio had to be lifted to safety by helicopter, though the site itself was closed for the winter.

Man's erratic driving blamed on crutches

WELLINGTON (R) — A New Zealand man who drew several complaints from motorists about his erratic driving was found to be using crutches to operate the pedals of his car, police said. Sergeant Tony Pye said police received several calls about the driving of a 39-year-old man in Wainuiomata, near Wellington, on Sunday afternoon. Police stopped him and found he was using two crutches to operate the accelerator and brake. "He had a deformity from below the knee that prevented his feet from reaching the pedals and was trying to steer as well as use the crutches to stop and go," Sgt. Pye said. Sgt. Pye said the man would probably be charged with dangerous or careless driving. The man also did not have a driver's licence.

Cambodia seizes smuggled antiquities

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Authorities in Cambodia's northern Siem Reap province have seized 245 ancient relics that were to be smuggled out of the country, the government Agency Khmere De Presse (AKP) news service reported here Monday. The province contains the historic 12th-century temple of Angkor Wat. The antiquities — jars, pots and small boxes believed to have been medicine containers — date from the eighth and ninth centuries, AKP said, quoting Eoung Vin, director of Angkor conservation. He said the relics were seized from a smuggler at a police checkpoint in the province in late December. AKP also reported that workers in Siem Reap's Banteay Srei district, home of a ninth-century pink sandstone temple of the same name, had found a large ancient kiln measuring 60 metres by 300 metres. The kiln had been found on an historically important hill, the report said.

4 winners to share U.K.'s \$60m lottery

LONDON (R) — Four winners will share nearly £40 million (\$60.3 million) in Britain's second double rollover lottery Saturday as gambling fever gripped the country. It was the second highest prize since the lottery began over a year ago and the second rollover this month. Three winners shared a record £42 million (\$63.4 million) payment just three weeks ago. If there is no outright winner in previous weeks the prize is rolled over to the following week. Camelot, the company that operates the weekly lottery, said despite the Arctic weather that his bit Britain in the last few days tickets sold at a brisk pace but not with the same frenzy that accompanied the record jackpot. But the snow and below freezing temperatures did not deter people from staking more than £8 million (\$12.07 million) in an hour during peak time Saturday.

Monks froth at mouth over Buddha beer

BEIJING (AFP) — A brewery in eastern China has been forced to discontinue production of its "Buddha" brand beer, after being taken to court by local monks furious at the brand's sacrilegious logo, a report said Monday. The dispute frothed over in June last year when monks at the Dafo Monastery in Zhejiang province took exception to the name and logo used on a new line of Buddha beer manufactured by the Xinchang Brewery. The logo was the same as that used by their monastery and advertisements for the controversial brew were often shown on local television stations, the China Daily said.

Niger military refuses to bow to foreign pressure over coup

NIAMEY (AFP) — Niger's new military ruler, Col. Ibrahim Barre Maïnassara told diplomats Monday he would not bow to "intimidation from outside," following international criticism of his coup which ousted President Mahamane Ousmane and left at least five dead.

Condemnation came not only from Paris, Washington and Bonn, speaking in the name of democracy, but also from other west African states who fear such military strong-arm behaviour might be contagious.

The Foreign Ministry in France, the former colonial power, nevertheless stated Monday that 140 French workers engaged in humanitarian cooperation would continue their activities in spite of Saturday's coup.

Danish Cooperation Minister Poul Nielson announced the suspension of all new aid projects. In 1994, Denmark made Niger a privileged cooperation partner and provided \$4 million in aid last year, but Mr. Nielson warned that "we are envisaging freezing all aid to this country if new steps are not taken to restore democracy."

The violent return to military rule took place against a background of political and social tension hinging on divisions at the highest levels of power.

Domestic reaction to the coup has been less than critical. Residents of the capital, Niamey, greeted the military warmly, believing the army to be in a position to deliver them from the turmoil of recent months.

"We're on your side, but don't stay too long," traders in Niamey shouted at soldiers.

Businesses were open in the capital although the airport remained closed and telephonic communication was again cut off.

A coalition government had been in place in Niger since last February, when parliamentary elections gave the opposition a

slight majority in the National Assembly.

The deadlock between Mr. Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou, most notably over the 1996 budget, brought many of Niger's state institutions to a standstill over recent months.

Civil servants have not been paid for three months and labour unions and students staged several demonstrations and strikes to claim their wages and unpaid grants.

Mr. Amadou claimed such demands could not be met, but said he hoped to raise the money soon thanks to a deal that was to be signed before Feb. 15 with the International Monetary Fund.

In the opinion of former Prime Minister Amadou Cheffou, now residing in Dakar, the coup was "predictable," given "the suffering of the people of Niger."

Paris and Washington reacted with the usual measures taken in the event of military takeovers by suspending military and non-humanitarian civilian aid.

The secretary-general of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Federico Mayor, said Monday that he views "as regrettable this attack against democratic legitimacy", which he called "a troubling step backward in the African continent's march toward freedom and democracy."

In a statement, he added that UNESCO was "ready to play its mandated role in our fields of competence and is at the disposal of the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and the United Nations to assist the people of Niger to restore their fundamental rights."

The loss of France as its largest aid donor will strike at the heart of Niger's economy. Uranium, of which it is the world's second largest producer, accounts for 80 per cent of its export earnings despite the declining prices of the metal.

Neighbouring Mali and Benin were quick to condemn the weekend's events.

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Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

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Media on firing line

THE NEW YORK-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has recently confirmed that 1995 was one of the worst years for journalists with 51 of them killed in the course of doing their work. This is not to mention the number of people engaged in the mass media who have been injured, maimed or incarcerated in a continuous campaign of terror against reporters and editors mainly in the developing countries. In many situations it is not only the state that "hunts" journalists but extremist factions which also fear the free flow of ideas.

It may be no coincidence that the truly democratic countries have no record of terror or intimidation against journalists. Freedom of the press is a valued commodity in democratic countries and people who serve the profession are generally well regarded and protected from undue state interferences, abuse or discrimination. Differences of views are normally left for civil courts to handle under the laws of defamation or libel. Likewise it is no accident that murdering or terrorising journalists generally occurs in undemocratic states which often feel threatened by freedoms of the press and expression. Killing or arbitrarily detaining journalists is a common experience in the latter category of nations.

It is dangerous enough for many journalists to put their lives on the line when reporting on dangerous missions especially armed conflicts. To add to their pains and agonies the constant risk of persecution and prosecution is omnipresent. Instead of putting the mass media under greater control and scrutiny, countries should aim to add to their protection.

This issue is also of particular concern to us here in Jordan where our law on press and publications could be changed in an effort to make freedom of the press more "responsible," as government members like to put it. While we may understand and appreciate the ongoing efforts to elevate the profession into greater heights of integrity, we think that built-in provisions should be incorporated into our legislations with a view to protecting journalists from excessive scrutiny and attacks.

Intimidating the mass media anywhere in the world is not the right or effective way to make it more credible and faithful to its ideals. There are unspoken practices that the mass media should not adopt just as there are measures that governments should refrain from initiating against the media. Where to draw the line between what is legitimate and acceptable and what is not is the all-too-important question that people from both sides of the fence should sit together and think about with the aim of articulating a sensible balance.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

BY EMPHATICALLY and openly declaring that Jordan is backing the establishment of the independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and by pledging Jordan's absolute support for the Palestinians in their endeavours, King Hussein has defined the Kingdom's clear stand with regard to Palestine and the future of the Palestinian people, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily. The King, who was speaking in the presence of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in the wake of the Palestinian general elections, also underlined the need for the Palestinians to pursue the path of democracy, political pluralism and respect for human rights side by side with their Jordanian brothers and sisters. The two leaders' meeting, their discussions over the coming stage and the joint future of the united family of Jordanians and Palestinians reflect the two sides' long-term planning for unified action, a unified march and unified efforts under the umbrella of a just and durable peace in the region, added the paper. What the Jordanian and Palestinian people hope, said the paper, is to see their respective leaderships taking firm and serious steps not only in handling the challenges and the requirements of peace, but also steps towards a lasting unity which can guarantee and protect the aspired durable peace.

TAHER ADWAN a writer for Al Dustour called on the Jordanian and Palestinian leaderships to create and encourage specialised centres that would conduct research and serious discussions on the prospects of unifying the two banks of the Jordan River. Following the elections in Palestine, and later after the creation of the Palestine state, talk about confederation or twinning of the two sides, will continue at the popular and official levels, but the leaderships in the two countries ought to embark on serious steps like the creation of centres of research and study to discuss the best way of uniting the two peoples in such a manner that would protect their own respective interests, said the writer. It is the duty of the Jordanian and Palestinian people to take this important step now and before the Palestine state has emerged so as to be ready when the moment comes for taking national decisions, he added.

The View from Fourth Circle

Nabataean and Hashemite Jordan: A road map for well-being

By Rami G. Khouri

Some people are excited, some are angry, some are scared, some are enthusiastic and hopeful; but everyone is talking about the same subject: what should Jordan do to rise to the challenges of the immediate future, in view of the rapid changes in our domestic, regional and global contexts? The case of Laith Shbeilat, our enigmatic involvement with Iraq and its assorted dimensions, our relations with Palestine and Israel, the erratic stock market, the problem of corruption and the continuing domestic confrontation over normalisation with Israel are all subjects of lively discussion among the citizenry. An important asset for Jordan is that the citizenry feels secure enough to speak freely about such national policy issues, to propose policy alternatives and to agree or disagree with the government, without fear of being harassed or arrested as long as the debate remains within the consensus on the bounds of civility and legality.

It is comforting to keep in mind that we are not the first on this land to address such a wide range of challenging national issues in the quest for stable and satisfying nationhood. We can be assisted in this process today by a resource that is literally under our feet: our own history. It seems to me that we will respond to our challenges most effectively if we strike a healthy balance between two trends that define most of the modern Middle East — on the one hand, looking for our security and longevity primarily among foreign investors, ideological patrons, or military protectors, and, on the other hand, forging durable nationhood by absorbing the lessons of our own history and identifying the strengths within our own community.

The very long continuity of social values and political systems in the Arab World, combined with the striking similarities between the geo-political contexts of the Nabataean and Hashemite Jordanian kingdoms, provides us with a valuable conceptual road map for assuring Jordan's well-being. The Nabataeans do not only illuminate a bright episode of Arab/Semite history over two thousand years ago; they also continue to teach us about impressive nationhood today and in the future.

The Nabataeans can teach us a great deal about the importance of economic diversification. The Nabataeans initially established themselves and flourished in southern Jordan and Petra because they struck a healthy balance among commercial trade, industry and agriculture. They were not over-reliant on any single economic activity, and thus could withstand a downturn in any major economic sector when this occurred because of factors beyond their control. They also remained in touch with their ancestral cultural and social strengths, such as agriculture and desert life.

The Nabataeans endured for about half a millennium in a strategic and turbulent region in part because they struck a sustainable balance between economic expansion and environmental conservation, especially in terms of their water resources. Rather than over-taxing underground water aquifers, they painstakingly harnessed, stored and conveyed ground and surface water through an extensive system of public and private cisterns, wells, reservoirs, pipelines and channels.

Where economy converged with politics and diplomacy, the Nabataeans were master artisans of the statecraft of dignified survival and pragmatic accommodation. The few literary accounts we have suggest that they seem to have valued maintaining good relations with their neighbours and with more distant imperial powers, in

order that wasteful warfare could be avoided and commercial trade could flow uninterrupted. The Nabataeans generally tried to stay out of quarrels between neighbouring powers. They were known to arrange royal weddings with ruling families in neighbouring kingdoms in order to cement peaceful political ties that assured regional stability, and in turn allowed trade and whole economies to flourish (one such wedding took place between the daughter of King Aretas IV and the son of King Herod Antipas of Judaea). The Nabataeans resorted to violence only when they thought that the alternative would be national humiliation, subjugation and ruin; this occurred in the late 4th Century BC in their military confrontation with Antigonos, the Hellenistic ruler of Syria. Having demonstrated their will to fight if need be, the Nabataeans subsequently averted further warfare by arranging a political truce.

Critically important was the Nabataean inclination to reach a *modus vivendi* with the great imperial powers of the time, such as Greece, Rome and Persia. This desire to accommodate adjacent powers reflected an understanding of a principle that still seems valid today: domestic development and improved living standards are best assured not by military force or reliance on the protection of foreign powers, but rather by political understandings that allow all concerned parties to avoid warfare and to benefit from domestic investments and the consequent free flow of commercial trade. Diplomacy averted warfare in 62 BC, when the Nabataeans offered 300 talents of silver to the Roman governor of Syria, Aemilius Scaurus, who had sent a force to take over Nabataea and its capital at Petra for Rome. Another telling incident occurred around 26 BC, when the Emperor Augustus sent an expeditionary force of Roman and auxiliary troops headed by Aelius Gallus to conquer the Nabataean and/or the Sabaeen kingdoms, in order to control the lucrative trade routes from Arabia. The Nabataean chief minister, the very ambitious and devious Syllaeus, went out to meet Aelius Gallus and his men and offered to guide them through the desert. Syllaeus took the Romans on an aimless trek through parched desert lands that decimated the troops, averted a military clash, and securely retained the desert caravan routes in Nabataean hands.

This approach also provided the stability that in turn prompted domestic interests to invest in industrial, agricultural and trade ventures. When the Nabataeans did resort to predatory acts or attempted to assure their security through military means, they were not very successful; a case in point is the reported incidents of Nabataean piracy in the Red Sea, which resulted in a decisive defeat at the hands of the Egyptian Ptolemaic navy in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. In other words, the well-being of individuals as well as the welfare of entire kingdoms and nations could best be assured by peaceful integration of resources throughout the Middle East region, notably in the fields of industry, agriculture and commercial trade.

In the domestic political, cultural and social spheres, the Nabataean Kingdom honoured several important principles, perhaps the most important of which was a tradition of what we can call "good governance." The Roman writer Strabo recounts that in the late first century BC the Nabataean king "is so democratic that he often renders an account of his kingship in the popular assembly." Participation and accountability, it seems, have been good for national well-being in the Middle East for a very long

time. We also learn from Strabo that Petra was famous for its flourishing court system, which dispensed justice equitably to Nabataeans and Romans alike. These accounts reflect a respect for the rule of law and for equitable and humble governance; they may also translate into institutional and political terms the traditional Arab/Semite emphasis on responsible tribal leadership.

The combination of enlightened leadership at home and open economic interaction regionally and globally resulted in the development of Petra into a wealthy, impressive capital that was well respected in its own days. The very dramatic achievements of Nabataean technology, especially in hydrology, ceramics and stonework, must be partly explained by the fact that Nabataean engineers and technologists enjoyed a combination of stability and rising living standards that was essential for sustained national development.

Another important lesson we can learn from the Nabataeans is the value of constructive cultural and human interaction with the rest of the world. Nabataean culture and art are renowned for their synthesis of indigenous and foreign traditions. This is especially obvious in their architecture, which comprises a spectacular blend of Nabataean, Egyptian, Assyrian and Greco-Roman traditions. Petra developed into a stunning metropolis partly because of its wealth, and partly because of its citizens' capacity to absorb constructive impulses from other people. This is why the culture and art of the Nabataeans show steady growth and improvement over a period of some 500 years. The lesson we learn — repeated again in the golden centuries of the early and mediaeval Islamic eras — is that interaction with other cultures is a positive force for one's domestic growth, if that interaction occurs within a context of respect rather than dominance.

Finally, we may also be able to learn valuable lessons from the balance that the Nabataeans struck between religious fervor and material well-being. The Nabataeans had a rich pantheon of gods and goddesses; many religious high places and the proliferation of personal devotional figurines attest to the importance of faith in their everyday lives. Yet the Nabataeans also enjoyed material goods and experienced rising standards of living for many centuries. Perhaps this can be partly explained by their ability to strike a reasonable and satisfying balance between moral goods and material goods — between relying on their religion for personal or communal moral values, and relying on their own ingenuity and hard work for the production of material goods that made their daily physical life increasingly more comfortable.

It is impossible to single out one main reason why the Nabataeans were so impressive, successful and durable. The truth probably lies in the fact that they respected a combination of different values that remain relevant, even compelling, for national well-being in the modern Arab states: good governance, social equity and the rule of law, a diplomatic penchant for peace and good neighbourliness, regional economic cooperation and integration, mutually satisfying relations with the world's major powers, open cultural interaction with other people and an avoidance of either religious extremism or material over-indulgence. Modern Arab monarchies and republics that respect these values are likely to flourish for many centuries, and like the Nabataeans, to be remembered several millennia from today with a satisfying combination of fondness and respect.

Mother of Indian scams sparks call for poll reform

By Narayanan Madhavan

NEW DELHI — Scandals are not new to India, and certainly not so since prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao took charge in 1991.

His Congress Party government has been accused of dragging its feet or worse in scandals linked to alleged manipulation of sugar prices, stock markets or privatisation of the country's telecommunications system.

But the Hawala affair — an \$8 million bribes-for-favours scandal linked to foreign exchange dealings — that emerged this month and described by some as the mother of all scams, is significant for several reasons.

It has engulfed a big section of the Indian cabinet, including three ministers who have quit to face trial on charges of payoffs-for-favours brought by the federal police, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). It also comes close to general elections, expected in April.

Above all, it has brought

to centre stage a simmering demand for reform of the system of funding elections, which for a long time have been largely bankrolled by slush funds.

Leaders of congress and the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have admitted receiving political donations from S.K. Jain, an alleged illegal trader in foreign exchange, whose accounts diary served as the main basis for the latest investigations.

"We have to acknowledge that politics requires money, big money, and create a system of electoral financing that will be transparent and accountable," Executive Editor Gautam Adhikari said in a front-page commentary in the Times of India Sunday.

Former Prime Minister V.P. Singh called last week for fresh legislation to help state funding of political parties.

Analysts say Mr. Rao faces a backlash in his party after investigations by the CBI, which works under him.

"Even if Mr. Rao survives

the backlash in his party, the evil he has attacked will inevitably surface once more," commentator Prem Shankar Jha said in the Hindu newspaper Saturday.

"The only way to prevent this is to set up a system for funding the political expenses of recognised political parties legally."

Corruption, which the Hindu nationalist BJP says will be one of its major election issues, is a hot topic in the world's largest democracy.

There are grey areas that lie between illegal but widely accepted political donations on the one hand and favours-linked kick-backs on the other. The ill-defined boundaries have helped topple several political leaders.

An opinion poll published by Pioneer newspaper Sunday said two-thirds of respondents in Delhi and Lucknow believed that all politicians were corrupt.

The newspaper asked the respondents who was the cleanest among national leaders. Only 32 per cent thought Atal Behari Vaj-

payee, prime ministerial hopeful from the BJP and tainted by the latest scandal, was the cleanest.

Even fewer — seven per cent — backed L.K. Advani, his party chief who has denied charges filed against him in the Hawala scandal. He was among six former cabinet ministers charged, including the three who quit to face charges they deny.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao won 23 per cent support.

Mr. Rao's spokesman has denied Mr. Vajpayee's charge that Mr. Rao took 30 million rupees (\$850,000) through conduits in the scandal.

Mr. Rao's four-year-old economic reform programme was geared to cut state favours and curb opportunities for corruption.

Analysts say the new scandal could prove a rallying point for growing public resentment against electoral malpractice. "This scam might just redemocratised India," constitutional expert Upendra Baxi said.

Niger coup draws francophone wrath

By Nicholas Pythian

ABIDJAN — Niger's military coup, West Africa's second in less than a month after a year of relative stability, has raised the hackles of France and its former colonies in the region.

The former French colony's new leaders say Saturday's coup poses no long-term threat to multi-party democracy there, arguing that political squabbling was about to derail economic reform and dash hopes of ending a ware revolt.

But in a region where francophone experiments in multi-party democracy in the 1990s have contrasted strongly with military rule in English-speaking neighbours such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone and latterly Gambia, many seem unconvinced.

Niger's neighbour Mali, another ex-French colony, issued a statement Sunday denouncing what it called an "illegal tactic which is a serious blow to the march of democracy in Africa".

Niger's partners in the francophone Conseil d'Entente regional economic grouping — Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and Togo — sent envoys to mediate, officials in Niamey say.

But Benin, one of the early champions of democratic reform among French-speaking countries in the region, left no doubt about its own views in a statement Sunday.

"It represents a halt to the development of democracy in Niger and a setback for democratic process in

Africa," it said, urging the international community to act to ensure "a rapid return to constitutional legality".

Former colonial power France, Niger's main aid and trade partner, did not mince its words, cutting off civilian and military cooperation.

"France condemns the military coup in Niger," its foreign ministry said. "The coup leader are responsible for the safety of the legal authorities now in detention. France calls for their release and a return to constitutional order."

After tempestuous and often bloody pro-democracy campaigns in the early 1990s, French-speaking countries in West and Central Africa, which mostly became independent in the 1960s, have enjoyed a period of relative calm.

Togo's president, Gnassingbe Eyadema, has the dubious distinction of launching black Africa's first military coup in 1963 but has since bowed to a form of multi-party democracy — albeit dismissed by exiled opponents as a sham.

Ivory Coast, where independence President Felix Houphouet-Boigny built up a reputation for stability during over three decades in power, teetered during an October 1995 presidential election boycotted by the main opposition.

Up to 35 people died in political and ethnic violence before Mr. Houphouet-Boigny's designated successor Henri Konan Bedie emerged with a healthy majority for himself and later for his democratic party.

'Only passivity is dishonourable'

In this report focusing on the untold stories and hidden calamities of the war in the former Yugoslavia, Ed Vulliamy talks to retired French General Philippe Morillon, one-time United Nations commander in Sarajevo and of NATO's Rapid Reaction Force

ON THE very day that the peace treaty ending Bosnia's war was signed in Paris, last December 14, one of the more flamboyant characters to emerge from the carnage ended his own distinguished career as a soldier.

The figure of General Philippe Morillon had been etched into Bosnian history since his arrival in the enclave of Srebrenica, during the first bloody debate in that town, which led to its subsequent, perverse designation as a "safe area" in spring 1993. He became an overnight hero; the main street was renamed in his honour.

The following July, Gen. Morillon concluded his term as United Nations commander in Sarajevo with a lunch at his sand-bagged residence. Ricard and caviar were served, and in deep De Gaulle-esque tones, Gen. Morillon warned that only a decisive show of force from the West could force a peace, otherwise Bosnia would become "a series of Gaza Strips, ruled through fear". That show of force was still two more years away.

Today, speaking to the Guardian in his first important interview since retirement, Gen. Morillon is harshly critical of the U.N. mandate in Bosnia which he dismisses as a "mandate of angel-ism" — an illusion that the mere presence of U.N. soldiers with blue helmets and the blue flag would help prevent the explosion. "His men's rules of engagement were 'a force'."

Gen. Morillon is by far the highest-ranking military commander to offer such views. And in the interview, he reveals his own efforts to carve a role for NATO through "strictly unofficial" contacts with alliance commanders.

Gen. Morillon also describes for the first time his role as a guiding hand behind the deployment last summer of the Rapid Reaction Force, which, he confesses, he personally ordered to tear up its restrictive U.N. mandate and attack the Serbs — an escalation of the U.N.'s military role that led directly to NATO intervention last autumn and the Dayton agreement.

Gen. Morillon also says that the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, con-

firmed to him at the time that the army of Serbia proper was fighting in Bosnia, in defence of undertakings given to the international community.

Gen. Morillon, a veteran of Algeria in the early 1960s, was a natural choice for a role in the U.N.'s Balkan effort. He had spent two years with the Yugoslav army as an envoy from the French defence ministry, and knew many of its senior officers when it split into Croat, Bosnian and — mainly — Serbian columns.

In October 1991, Gen. Morillon was included in a secret seminar held in Metz by senior officers from the armed forces of the Western European Union, gathered to consider options for Croatia. The two-week session's recommendation to the European Community and U.N. was for a "rapid reaction force", equipped with attack helicopters and tanks, and with a mandate to "assert its authority" and hold the ravaging of former Yugoslavia and check through military force.

Gen. Morillon was an enthusiastic proponent of the report, but it was discarded and buried.

Instead, Gen. Morillon found himself second-in-command to the Egyptian General Saif Nambiar at the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) headquarters in Sarajevo, chosen for its equidistance between Zagreb and Belgrade. Gen. Morillon was convinced that "something totally different from traditional U.N. peacekeeping" was required.

When the Bosnian hurricane began to blow, the Sarajevo team was faced with a decision: either to evacuate or expand the mandate. "I said we must have a mandate for Bosnia... We were reacting blow by blow, without sufficient liaison with New York, or the Community or even each other." The UNPROFOR HQ was moved from Sarajevo.

Gen. Morillon returned to the Bosnian capital in August 1992, with a mandate to open the airport and secure the humanitarian aid bridge to Split. He was among those urging a broader brief to cover the whole of Bosnia. The outcome, he says, "was not bad — deliver humanitarian aid while establishing the practical conditions for the (Vance-Owen) peace plan".

But, he says, "there was a confusion of aims, between two ideas: we had to be impartial, and I was impartial. But not neutral. They are not the same thing. My motto is: 'Only passivity is dishonourable' — the way I understood my mission was



Gen. Philippe Morillon

to oppose everything to do with ethnic cleansing. We could mediate, but we had to be resolutely opposed to the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. New York's understanding was this 'angel-ism', this illusion that we could remain passive."

Immediately, a rift opened between Gen. Morillon's ambitions on the ground, and those of the U.N. 'angelists' making policy in Zagreb and New York. The disagreement was fundamental, over who the 'Protection Force' was in Bosnia to protect.

"The idea," says Gen. Morillon, "that we were only there to protect ourselves, our soldiers, was unacceptable to me. This was the reason I had so many crises of anger — I was angry with people talking to me about the mandate all the time. We wanted nothing to do with the mandate, but with the spirit of our mission... which was to protect the population. To achieve that, we had to be able to use force against anyone denying or even questioning our freedom of action."

"It was my permanent instinct — we have to use force. And that is the reason I was so angry when, after my departure, authorisation was given to every side to control our convoys. If you accept such control, you have no role to play, and should pull out."

The U.N. Security Council's resolutions were, says Gen. Morillon, "like the

Koran — everything was there, including its contrary." But in terms of military authority, the mission was undersold.

From retirement, Gen. Morillon lambasts the mandate's rules of engagement: "To limit our ability to fire only when fired upon was much too restricted," he says. "The idea of the 'right to legitimate defence' was a farce."

Gen. Morillon shared this view with the officer commanding the first British contingent to arrive in Bosnia, Colonel Bob Stewart, who promised: "I won't be forced off any road," and said he would regard any militia that interrupted the delivery of aid as "the enemy".

Such a position raised eyebrows in Whitehall, and at Zagreb command. Col. Stewart was considered wild and rash — but, says Gen. Morillon, "Stewart was right. I tried to back all the way. Gen. Morillon also pays tribute to the soldiers of the next British regiment in the Prince of Wales's Own Yorkshire, for opening fire on a Croat position, killing at least four, after the ambush of a convoy bound for Tuzla in early 1993.

"It was the first battle, and the right battle I knew that it was a sign of our authority."

The French in Sarajevo took the greatest number of casualties among the U.N. contingents. Gen. Morillon blames not only the rules of engagement, but a lack of

adequate protection.

Gen. Morillon says it took him "an absurd amount of time just to get sufficient armour". To deploy adequate armoured vehicles in Sarajevo, he says — referring to the nadir of the French presence — "I had to wait for the assassination of the Bosnian deputy prime minister (Hakija Turajlic, shot at a Serb roadblock inside a French patrol vehicle) while he was escorted by my men. It was a drama for me to find solace for myself after that."

By contrast, Srebrenica, March 1993, was Gen. Morillon's bourn. He recalls it with a pleasant immobility.

As Serb artillery pounded the town, Gen. Morillon helicoptered into the town in a gesture of solidarity and ended up staying for several days as residents prevented him from leaving.

He braved the guns and promised the people he would stay among them until their security was guaranteed. He now knows he was actually a hostage of the Bosnian government, that an order was sent from Sarajevo to ensure he remained in the enclave.

"I tried to escape at night," he says, "but it was the sight of hundreds of people, women and old people and children, coming through the snow that night from the places that had fallen, that made me realise I had no choice but to stay."

The outcome was the first "safe area", bloody overrun, with thousands murdered, in July 1994. The safe area was what Gen. Morillon required of himself in order to leave the town, but it was not what he regarded as the solution. "As far as I was concerned, it was a temporary expedient to protect the town until the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan. For Srebrenica to become an Indian reservation for two-and-a-half years was absolutely not what I had in mind."

Gen. Morillon had learned early on who his main adversary would be. Upon taking command in Sarajevo, he spawned a cunning scheme to break the siege: to establish UNPROFOR's headquarters in the Serb-held suburb of Ilidza. Ilidza, he says, "was the gateway to Sarajevo, key to the city. I did not want the airport, I wanted Ilidza."

It was here that the Serbs were later to erect roadblocks which closed the tarmac and route into the capital from Split, Mostar and the west, thereby tying the noose.

Gen. Morillon tempted

and flattered the Bosnian Serb president, Radovan Karadzic, with the idea of quartering UNPROFOR in a Serbian neighbourhood, and convinced him. The mayor of Ilidza was delighted at the prospect of the hard currency following in UNPROFOR's slipstream. But the plan was quashed by the one man who saw through it: Gen. Mladic.

"It was constant arm-wrestling with Mladic," says Gen. Morillon. "I once told him to remember that Napoleon ended up on the island of Elba. He laughed."

Such was Gen. Mladic's authority, says Gen. Morillon, that President Milosevic himself was a hostage to the Bosnian Serb general. "He was his prisoner, and remained so until the summer of 1995."

Gen. Mladic enjoyed the loyalty of not just the Bosnian Serbs but the whole Serbian army, Gen. Morillon says.

So the Serbian army was definitely fighting in Bosnia, for all Mr. Milosevic's undertakings about the Drina blockade that would throttle his Bosnian Serb brothers?

"When I went to see Milosevic," says Gen. Morillon, "I spoke to him about this. He was obliged

The U.N. mandate in Bosnia was one of angel-ism, an illusion that the mere presence of U.N. soldiers with blue helmets and the blue flag would help prevent the explosion

to admit to me that they were involved; he couldn't deny that to me. The Serbian army was in there until May 1995."

This is the first testimony of a confession by President Milosevic that his own troops were so engaged.

By the time Gen. Morillon left Sarajevo in 1993, he says, "I felt the threat of powerlessness" in the U.N. mission. He does not single out individuals for blame, but refers to "Zagreb" and "New York", the operation's political and diplomatic nerve-centres.

"There was conflict between Zagreb and Sarajevo," says Gen. Morillon.

"Relations with Zagreb were usually by phone, and from time to time there were angry crises. I repeated it every day: 'We have to be respected! If not, we have to withdraw.' I considered them functionaries; we were on the ground."

Zagreb, he adds, "was under the influence of 'angelism', 40 years of peacekeeping traditions.

They were frightened we would become involved in a disaster like Somalia. They were terrified of the U.N. being seen as partial. They failed to understand the difference between impartiality and neutrality."

This past summer, "the defining moment" of bombardment around Sarajevo, was "exactly what I had been waiting for since the very beginning", says Gen. Morillon.

The attack which finally forced the Serbs to the negotiating table was most famously mounted by NATO from the air. But the guns of the Anglo-French Rapid Reaction Force also unleashed vast quantities of ordnance against the Serbs. The RRF was engaged way beyond its mandate, which was, strictly, to fire only in defence of U.N. personnel when endangered.

Back in Paris, Gen. Morillon had lost patience. He had long argued for a Rapid Reaction Force and, once deployed, it was put under his command. And it was Gen. Morillon who made sure the force's rules of engagement were broken.

"When the force was sent," he recalls, "a statement was made that the mission was only to protect

our own soldiers. I was so angry. I shouted: 'If this is what they are for, then withdraw them!'"

The French General André Soubirou was commander of the force in the field. "I received Soubirou in my office," says Gen. Morillon, "and I told him: 'Don't be concerned about the rules of engagement. You have to establish the tactical advantage, and use it. Say to your opponent, see that helicopter? See that tank? See that battery? Now shoot me if you dare!'" That was what I did in my way at Srebrenica, and that was the directive I personally gave to Soubirou."

These were days during which NATO effectively sacked the U.N. leadership in Zagreb, overriding the U.N.'s plea that air strikes cease. It looked from the outside like a spectacular intervention from the sidelines, but Gen. Morillon had already brought NATO in, long ago, by the back door.

While he was commander in Sarajevo, Gen. Morillon recalls, "NATO was anxious to become more directly involved." The U.S. admiral Jim Border was at that time the commander of NATO South, in Naples; he was also Gen. Morillon's close friend and ally in terms of what he thought needed to be done in Bosnia.

Gen. Morillon came to believe that "so long as Washington was not involved in a common action, there could be no solution. It should have been possible to do this as the U.N. and as Europe. But in the end, I share the U.S. position — with the exception that I did not agree that the need for us to act powerfully against the Serbs automatically meant support for (Bosnian President Alija) Izetbegovic or (Croatian president Franjo) Tudjman. We were agreed on the means."

Since leaving Sarajevo, Gen. Morillon has crossed the Atlantic 10 times to lobby the Pentagon, Vice-President Al Gore, the Senate majority leader, Bob Dole, and a host of officials and congressmen in favour of a resolute line. His main ally, pivotal to winning over the Clinton administration, was the navy's new chief of staff, Admiral Jim Borden.

Gen. Morillon has moved to Brittany, with a pied-à-terre in Versailles, his possessions, notes and medals still packed in boxes. He is about to start work on two books: One with the splendidly Bonapartian title *Letter to Young Officers*, a military credo, and another about one of "those very few things in life that hit you here (he points to his heart) and that you will never forget" — the story of Srebrenica.

The Guardian.

Israel: U.S. cannot bridge gaps with Syria

(Continued from page 1)

on. Three days of formal talks were due to resume after Monday.

"Only a country which gives priority to the economy can win at the end of the day. Building a hotel is for example an element of security. I am for the European model which stresses the economy," Mr. Peres said, according to the daily Haaretz.

"But General Yaakov Amidor, head of the military intelligence, retorted that Mr. Peres had got it wrong, saying it "is impossible to apply the European model to the Middle East."

"I disapprove of this analysis. A hotel is important as long as there is no war, but when the other side has decided to open hostilities it is military positions which make the difference and not hotels."

Stressing the "enormous differences" between Europe and the Middle East, Gen. Amidor noted that "Europe has the same religion, the same culture and the same economic bases."

Chief-of-Staff General Amnon Shaked said he thought it was impossible to reach an accord with Syria before Israeli general elections scheduled in October. "The differences are too large," he said.

Mr. Peres, who said Israel

was in a "race against time," attacked the "sceptics who didn't believe either that it was possible to reach an accord with the Palestinians and a normalisation with Jordan."

He told the radio that there had been progress in Wye Plantation, but there had not yet been any breakthrough. "There is progress in the normalisation of relations, in the economy, but on security arrangements we are only at the beginning," Mr. Peres said.

added. Syria also said Monday there was a chance of reaching a peace deal with Israel despite the gloom surrounding the talks.

"Even if the earlier talks in Maryland did not result in a solution, there is still a chance of reaching peace during continued negotiations and the upcoming visit by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher," the Syrian government daily Tishrin said.

ICRC campaigns for PoWs

(Continued from page 1)

U.S. lieutenant in Sarajevo on Sunday.

NATO officers in the Bosnian capital complained that a tight security regime theoretically in force since December was now being strictly enforced, isolating them from the Bosnians.

"We have to go out in pairs, one of us has to be armed, we can't go to nightclubs or cafes and we have to have flak jackets, helmets and a shotgun if we are travelling in a vehicle," one officer grumbled.

"This is not a great way to inspire confidence in the local population or to keep morale up among your men," complained one French officer.

In Belgrade, rump Yugoslavians made progress towards

reintegrating itself into the world community, much of which had shunned it for its role in setting off the bloody 3½-year Bosnian war.

The Yugoslav government announced it would recognise the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, which diplomats said could pave the way for full diplomatic relations with the European Union (EU).

The EU feels that Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic should be rewarded for his role in bullying the Bosnian Serbs into accepting the Dayton agreement.

The agreement keeps Bosnia as a single state but divides it into two internal "entities" — a Muslim-Croat federation and a Serb entity. Elections are due to be held by September.

Jordan was not a factor in Palestinian polls

(Continued from page 12)

come successfully.

"This is the first democratic coalition of its kind," he said. "It is time Palestinians entered an alliance to participate in decision-making."

Mr. Malki said the elections demonstrated differences and divisions not only within the opposition factions as Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Islamic Jihad movement but also within

Fateh itself.

"There are huge changes surfacing and the major collapse started with Fateh. The concept of factions has collapsed," he said. "Members of the different groups did not abide by their leaderships' decisions which signifies a collective rebellious movement that is highly important and should be closely studied."

Mr. Malki argued that the control of Fateh over the council and the absence of opposition did not mean that the majority of the Palesti-

nian people approve of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and the Oslo agreement.

Mr. Shaqqa agreed and said that the absence of effective opposition within the council was due to the abstention of leading opposition figures from nominating themselves. He said that there was a general support for the Palestinian National Authority's policies but at the same time the large turnout of voters in the elections reflected the "Palestinian yearning for democratic practices."

Israel to freeze inquiry

(Continued from page 1)

tion in the United States is about 25 times higher than in Israel but that Israeli authorities would never consider discarding blood donations by immigrants from America.

About 20,000 Ethiopians were brought to Israel in two massive airlifts in 1984 and 1991, when they were hailed as the "lost tribe of Israel" who had succeeded in maintaining their faith for centuries isolated from the rest of Jewry.

Since then the Ethiopian community, now estimated to number between 30,000 and 60,000, has complained about widespread discrimination.

have challenged their Jewishness, insisting they undergo formal conversions.

A majority of the Ethiopians remain housed in trailer parks grouped in remote development towns and unemployment for the community runs at 20 per cent, compared to less than eight per cent for the rest of the population, according to labour ministry figures.

And in schooling, a recent report showed that a large number of Ethiopian children are placed in classes for learning disabilities while teenagers are regularly shunted into vocational training that virtually closes the door to higher level jobs.

Iraq is 'keen'

(Continued from page 12)

the United Nations on limited oil sales.

Traders in Baghdad said on Monday the dinar has traded at 1,000 to the American currency in the past few days, ending a two-week rally that saw it rise from 3,000.

The dinar was worth \$3.1 prior to the imposition of the U.N. trade sanctions.

The Iraqi currency firmed after Baghdad's agreement to enter talks with the U.N. on the selling of limited amounts of oil for the purchase of urgent humanitarian needs (see page 2).

The dinar's spectacular strength has sent prices of goods falling in Baghdad, prompting an unprecedented shopping spree in the capital.

Berlusconi wants Scalfaro to name new premier

ROME (R) — Centre-right leader Silvio Berlusconi was quoted Monday as saying he would ask President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to name a new prime minister when he meets him this week for crucial talks on Italy's political crisis.

His position, outlined in interviews in several newspapers, appeared to be a bid to head off a snap election and win time to stop his divided Freedom Alliance coalition falling apart in a bitter internal row over the best way forward for Italy.

It was not clear whether the media magnate's request would be acceptable to Mr. Scalfaro, who has set a final round of talks with political parties for Tuesday and Wednesday on the crisis sparked by Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's resignation.

Mr. Scalfaro, the supreme arbiter in Italian politics, has said parties must tell him then whether they can agree on a package of constitutional and electoral reforms and a government to see the process through.

He has warned that if they cannot, he would dissolve the country's 22-month-old parliament, clearing the way for a general election in mid-April, three years ahead of schedule.

"We will propose to Scalfaro that he should appoint a prime minister-designate. The prime minister-designate will then verify whether there is a workable agreement on reforms," Il Giornale newspaper quoted Mr. Berlusconi as saying.

Newspapers said former Prime Ministers Giuliano Amato and Carlo Azeglio Ciampi were possible candidates but Mr. Berlusconi said the name was not an issue.

"If an agreement can be found on reforms, the rest will come," he told La Repubblica newspaper.

Italy's parliament is so fragmented that it has been incapable of supporting a political government since Mr. Berlusconi was forced to resign as prime minister after seven turbulent months in December 1994.

Higher interest rate aims at solidifying dinar

Government working on new laws to attract investment, prevent monopoly

By Ghaila Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The recent increase in interest rate to 9.5 per cent is aimed at consolidating the stability of the Jordanian dinar and is part of a wider programme to attract foreign capital in the Kingdom, Planning Minister Rima Khalaf said Sunday.

Addressing about 200 businessmen at a seminar organised by the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA), Dr. Khalaf said that financial and monetary stability, government bureaucracy, legal environment as well as political stability were also factors that influence investment.

In her opening speech at the seminar, entitled "Economic Developments, Visions and Perceptions," the minister reviewed the global, regional as well as the local economic developments that occurred in the world during the last decade.

She also cited the impact of these developments on the

domestic economic issues, such as the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"We cannot exclude ourselves from the international institutions such as the WTO," she said.

The minister added that the diminishing role of the state in external economic relations and the rising role of the private sector as well as the globalisation of production were also factors that influence Jordan's economy.

She stressed the importance of attracting regional and foreign investment through enhancing the Kingdom's services and merchandise exports.

International competition should prompt the Kingdom to improve the quality of products as well as develop the technological base, she said.

Privatisation of state-owned entities, the minister said, is meant to encourage the private sector to assume a greater role in various economic activities as opposed to

the state-guided moves that Jordan has seen for many years.

However, she added, the privatisation process cannot simply improve efficiency or help lower prices, unless the private sector is provided by legislation to encourage and protect investment, encourage competition and guarantee intellectual property rights.

Dr. Khalaf announced that the government will this year introduce a package of laws complementing the investment promotion law. Such laws will include, a law for competition, a new companies law, a new law for the Amman Financial Market, and a new customs law.

She added that the package will open the door for more direct Arab and foreign investments in the Kingdom and will also prevent monopoly.

Dr. Khalaf emphasised the role the private sector can play in implementing the regional projects, which, she said, are to be executed in the



Rima Khalaf

near future.

Asserting that the government had only a limited role in attracting foreign investment, the minister called on

the private sector to launch joint ventures with foreign investors. This process will not only attract foreign capital to the Kingdom, but will

also provide access to the world's advanced technologies, she said.

Dr. Khalaf also said that the government had set a programme to support exports through helping local industries to compete successfully in the international market.

The programme aims at providing long-term funding, helping the private sector improve its production to suit the international specifications, providing data and expertise to Jordanian exporters, allowing the private sector to establish a free zone area to facilitate export and production procedures and developing regulations for customs tariffs as well as facilitating export-import procedures.

The minister reiterated the importance of improving the efficiency of both the private and public sectors in preparing Jordan to join international institutions as well as enter into the partnership agreement that Jordan initiated with the European Union (EU) earlier this month.

In a question-answer session following the seminar, Dr. Khalaf explained some controversial issues raised by businessmen.

Referring to some businessmen who established their businesses to cater only to the Iraqi market and complained of Jordan's recent decision to reduce by half its exports-for-oil to Iraq, Dr. Khalaf stressed the importance of directing exports to several markets saying that focusing on one market could threaten exports and industries.

"It is unhealthy to direct the production of an industry to one market which could encounter economic crises," she added.

Asked about regulations concerning prevention of monopoly and its relation with the patent system, the minister said the two do not encroach on the intellectual property rights adding that the law is intended to prevent any party from exercising any form of monopoly.

Calling for regulations to protect intellectual property rights, Dr. Khalaf said "a society which does not provide protection to patents will deprive itself of creativity."

As for lowering customs duties and its influence on the national industry, Dr. Khalaf said the Jordan's industries are protected and that the government does not favour one industry over the other. She added that to achieve fair competition among all sectors, the government decided to fix a certain percentage for tariff protection which will cover all industries in Jordan.

"We aim at achieving production efficiency as well as equality among all parties," she said.

Citing the new government regulations, she noted that these laws could not be implemented in a fair and flexible manner unless the government employs qualified staff.

She added that the government is preparing a programme in order to achieve this objective.

Saudis boost foreign reserves after Gulf war fall

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia used extra oil income to rebuild its foreign financial reserves after they plummeted to serious levels because of large payments for the Gulf war, bankers have said.

The kingdom, the world's largest oil producer and exporter, earned around \$3.8 billion in additional revenue in 1995 due to higher crude prices but nearly \$2 billion were set aside for those reserves.

Bankers said the sum could have been used to halve a projected budget deficit of 15 billion riyals (\$4 billion) in 1995 as part of reforms launched a few years ago to repair economic damage caused by weak oil prices.

"The projected 1995 budget deficit remained almost unchanged but I do not consider it actual (real) because revenues were higher and part of the increase is still in the state coffers," a Riyadh-based Saudi banker told AFP.

"The remaining increase was used in covering slightly higher expenditure across the board. It includes around \$900 million in the last payment for an external bank

debt and higher interest rates on internal debt."

From \$7.4 billion the end of 1994, Saudi Arabia's financial reserves with the International Monetary Fund grew to \$9.4 billion at the end of October, according to the bankers, who quoted IMF figures.

The reserves had been as high as \$25 billion in the early 1980s before they dove to a record low of \$5.9 billion in 1992, when Riyadh had to withdraw from its overseas assets to finance the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi invasion forces after seven months of occupation.

Bankers said Saudi Arabia's decision to rebuild its reserves intended to restore international confidence to its economy and more enough coverage for its imports, estimated at \$23.5 billion in 1995.

"The current level of reserves is enough to cover imports for a period of five months, which is good in global standards," one banker said.

Bankers said they expected the budget would be in a better shape in 1996 after the kingdom completed repayment of the \$4.5 billion loan

it borrowed from several international banks during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

They also expected oil prices to be equivalent to the 1995 price of \$16.8, which were higher by around \$1.3 over 1994. Non-oil income was also projected higher due to reforms and a rise to petrochemical production following expansions by the Saudi Arabian Basic Industrial Corporation.

Saudi Arabia, which controls around a quarter of the world's proven crude reserves, announced another austere budget this year with a forecast expenditure of \$40 billion riyals (\$4.9 billion). Bankers said the shortfall would be shored up through domestic borrowing as was the case in previous years.

A detailed breakdown of the 1996 budget has not released yet but bankers said spending on defence and other sectors remained almost unchanged.

According to the Saudi Al Iqtisadiyya daily, the government has also decided to pay local farmers nearly \$2.58 billion in outstanding dues to reverse a decline in the agricultural sector.

India, Israel sign pacts, ponder economic alliance

NEW DELHI (R) — India and Israel signed three agreements on economic cooperation Monday, and visiting Finance Minister Avraham Shohat said his country would open talks to consider an economic alliance with India.

Mr. Shohat, rounding off a three-week tour across Asia that ends Tuesday, said in response to an initiative from Indian businessmen that he would ask for talks to consider an economic alliance.

Israel with 5.5 million citizens and India with some 920 million are vastly different, but have found in their newfound closeness business interests that could generate billions of dollars in investment.

"The sky is the limit for what can be done," Mr. Shohat told a business luncheon soon after he met Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, architect of India's economic reform programme.

The two signed an investment promotion and protection agreement, a customs cooperation accord and a double taxation avoidance pact.

The two nations would give

most-favoured-nation (MFN) status to each other and promote investment that would get political protection and allow for easy repatriation of funds, India's finance ministry said in a statement.

The customs pact will help the two tackle offences jointly.

The agreements come in the wake of a major role for Israel's Bezeq in India's tender process to open up telephone services to the private sector. Bezeq is a partner in front-runner HFCL-Bezeq Telecom along with Himachal Futuristic Communications and Thailand's Shinawatra.

Israel's skills in greening its semi-arid wastelands is what New Delhi feels is needed by India. 70 per cent of whose agriculture still depends on vagrant monsoon rains.

Besides these fields, the two nations would seek joint ventures in healthcare, medical equipment, chemicals and textiles, officials said.

An economic alliance will involve regular and systematic bilateral meetings to seek out ventures, businessmen said.

Mr. Shohat, who arrived Friday with a 21-member team of businessmen, said Israel was gradually reducing its tariff barriers in a time-

found programme until 1998. Israel has offered a \$100 million line of credit to India's Export-Import Bank, and India would in turn offer a similar \$25 million facility, the finance ministry said in a statement.

Traditionally pro-Arab India resumed diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992, coinciding with economic reform in India and moves in the Middle East peace process.

"I believe it is not only because of your economic change but also because of political change that took place in the Middle East," Mr. Shohat said of the economic ties.

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311 / 699634

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
by Henri Arnold and Mike Arghim

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BIANC

PROOD

LAVOAW

KLUNIE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: OUBT FRAUD WOEFUL BOYSH
Answer: This happened to the laundry worker — HE WAS WASHED OUT

HOROSCOPE
FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Consider how far you can go in the profession of your choice, and then be more practical and get better organised.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get that plan organised today which has been difficult to do before this, and you can soon put it in operation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Make any corrections today which are needed where business affairs are concerned. Buy a present for the one you love.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You can come to a real understanding with one who is usually quite stubborn and self-seeking, and you can form an alliance.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Plan how to get your family to agree to some plan which you consider to be fine for later today.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is a good day to plan recreations for far into the future. Also get assistance you need from associates for a new project.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Talk over important monetary affairs with kin today and come to right decisions for later tonight success.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You are busy figuring out how to become more efficient at your tasks and gaining good suggestions from higher-up.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Contact your most experienced advisor today and get the leads you need to have greater success in your chosen career.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Get as much data as you can today so you can attain your fondest wishes, then make good use of it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Go to see the most powerful person of your acquaintance and get the support you need for some pet project.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Being with a clever friend and putting your heads together can soon bring you greater success in your field of endeavour.

THE Daily Crossword by George Urquhart

ACROSS

1 Disrespectful speech

5 Slow-witted one

10 Insulation material

14 Amo, amas, —

15 Actress Evans

16 British architect

17 Homer

19 Complications

20 Tennessee — Ford

21 Achieved

23 Nuclear —

26 Former Egyptian leader

27 Gold measure

29 — the boal (made waves)

32 Feel pain

35 — bomb

37 Negative vote

38 Crazy as a —

39 Removed

41 Small bay

42 Long — of the law

43 Precious

44 Had debts

45 Teeter-totter

49 Warble

51 Of punishment

53 Do away with

57 Kitchen utensil

60 — Domingo

61 Bedouin

62 Twin killing

65 Glut

66 Follow

67 Go to sea

68 Before deep or high

69 "Mr. — Goes to Town"

70 "Jane —"

DOWN

1 Morley — ol "60 Minutes"

2 Love in Milan

3 Dry heat bath

4 Afflicted

5 Stevevodes' union; abbr.

6 Excavate

7 Actress Swenson

Yesterday's puzzle solved

8 "Golden Boy" author

9 Violent person

10 Crazy person

11 Answer to "Who's on third?"

12 Left by its mother, as a call

13 Included with

18 Letter on a key

22 Commolion

24 Toward the mouth

25 Appraised

28 For rent

30 Roof overhang

31 — in the wool

32 Oh, dear!

33 Center

34 Scoring area

36 Still's partner

40 Small amount

41 Cave in

46 Navy construction worker

47 Jillian or Sothern

48 Plugged up

50 Misplace

52 Sierra —

54 Denial filling

55 Flight of steps

56 According to —

57 Barrel

58 Algerian port

59 Tuck

63 Bundy son

64 Bandleader Brown

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Daiwa Bank in \$3b sale to meet U.S. deadline

TOKYO (R) — Japan's Daiwa Bank announced the sale of more than \$3 billion worth of its U.S. business assets Monday, just days before a deadline set for it to quit the United States following a scandal over huge trading losses.

The buyer is another of Japan's big city banks, Sumitomo Bank Ltd.

The two banks said they had agreed Daiwa would transfer loans and related business assets worth \$3.3 billion from its U.S. branches and New York-based Trust Bank Unit to Sumitomo by Friday.

Sumitomo would also pay Daiwa \$65 million for rights to the business at 15 of its U.S. branches and its Trust Bank arm, a Daiwa spokesman said. He said he did not know when payment would be made.

Daiwa has a total 17 branches in the United States, two of which would close, the spokesman said.

Analysts in Tokyo said the banks' decision had been widely expected and came as no surprise to the market.

"The deal is unlikely to give much benefit to Sumitomo or boost its earnings," said Nozomu Kunishige, assistant general manager at Kleinwort Benson International. "It's just aimed at helping out Daiwa."

In November last year, U.S. authorities served the bank with a 24-count criminal indictment after it revealed it had suffered \$1.1 billion in losses as a result of unauthorized bond deals by one of its traders in New York. They ordered the bank to close its doors in the United States by Friday.

Daiwa has vowed to fight

the charges, which include the accusation that it covered up the losses.

Banking analysts said the shutdown would have a gradual negative impact on Daiwa's overall international operations.

Daiwa had a total of \$4.3 billion in loans and other transactions in the United States, its spokesman said. The remaining \$1 billion would be transferred to its parent body in Japan, he said.

Analysts believed the assets Sumitomo had agreed to take were mostly good loans, and that Daiwa would be left with most of its problem loans in the United States.

Besides its lending, Daiwa also had other types of assets in the United States, including securities, the spokesman said.

Gulf banks taste victory in \$1.2 billion loan mandate

KUWAIT (R) — A group of Gulf and American banks have won a mandate to raise \$1.2 billion for an industrial project in Kuwait in a surprise victory against a rival bid by America's export credit agency, banking sources said Monday.

Bankers said the award of most of the loan mandate to Gulf institutions was a vote of confidence for the region's efforts to play a bigger role in the funding of its own development.

Equate, a venture between America's Union Carbide Corp., Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) and Kuwait's Bubiyan Petrochemical Company, turned down a rival offer by U.S. export credit agency Eximbank that would have covered almost all the cost of the financing.

"We've proven the capability in the Gulf. Some outsiders were shocked," one banker involved in the winning bid said.

The sponsors (Equate) were continually told by other parties that this non-recourse, private sector

financing was not feasible in the Gulf, i.e. that the amount and term were not capable of syndication in the market. We proved them wrong."

The winning group of Chemical Bank, J.P. Morgan, Citibank and 11 Gulf banks including an Islamic bank will raise the loan for construction of a petrochemical complex at Shuaiba south of Kuwait City. The loan package was designed by National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait's largest commercial bank.

The bankers said the winning package was one of the largest, if not the largest, non-recourse project financing outside of the Gulf's crude oil and refining sector. It was also the first to use a mixture of conventional and Islamic finance, they said.

The 13 banks will take \$76.92 million each. The Islamic bank, Kuwait Finance House, will underwrite \$200 million under a complex web of agreements with the other participants.

Bankers said the Eximbank plan would have provided a U.S. government

guarantee for the finance while blocking any major role for the region's institutions.

Eximbank would have guaranteed \$930 million, Italy's SACE export credit agency would have guaranteed \$230 million and Germany's Hermes Agency would have guaranteed \$40 million.

"Instead, the winning package is classic non-recourse finance," said another source. "The only recourse is the project itself. There is no other security, apart from normal mortgage and insurance arrangements usual in cases such as this."

Total project cost will be about \$2 billion. The non-debt portion will come from the partners' equity participation.

The sources said Eximbank had asked for terms that Kuwaiti authorities considered too rigorous, including a financial covenant from PIC parent company Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and other guarantees from the Gulf state's government.

China state firms bleed red ink

BEIJING (R) — China's state-owned firms, burdened with debt and costly welfare obligations, are bleeding red ink and want changes in property rights to enable reform, according to a survey.

The State Commission for Economic Restructuring polled managers of 1,100 state firms around the country and found that one-third of the firms were operating in the

red, with total losses last year of 50 billion yuan (\$6 billion), the official China Daily said.

The ailing firms had average debt-to-asset ratios of 80 per cent and relied on state bank loans for 95 of their working capital, the newspaper said.

The managers listed bloated payrolls and heavy welfare obligations, such as caring for elderly and sick em-

ployees, as major causes of their woes, the daily said.

More than 36 per cent of respondents said unclear ownership of property was the biggest barrier to reform of state firms.

China's lack of a nationwide social insurance system, which would ease the pain caused by layoffs at state firms, and government interference in day-to-day business were two other major grievances, the daily said.

Asked what to do about ailing companies, 31 per cent recommended bankruptcy, while 65 per cent called for mergers, spinoffs or public auctions.

A leading Chinese economist said this month that 70 per cent of the country's 100,000 state enterprises were in the red — 40 per cent with chronic deficits.

Of the 90 million employees of these enterprises, 20 million were considered to be surplus. Fan Gan, deputy director of the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said in an interview.

China's leaders have vowed to step up efforts to reform the state sector, but have ruled out massive layoffs in favour of a gradual approach.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3794/04	Canadian dollar
	1.4882/92	Deutsche marks
	1.6664/74	Dutch guilders
	1.2080/90	Swiss francs
	30.59/63	Belgian francs
	5.1198/48	French francs
	1601.93/4	Italian lire
	106.50/60	Japanese yen
	6.9700/00	Swedish crowns
	6.5200/00	Norwegian crowns
	5.7525/25	Danish crowns
	1.4186/96	Singapore dollars
	0.7395/00	Australian dollars
	7.7335/45	Hong Kong dollars

One sterling	\$1.5038/48
Gold (ounce)	\$405.40/405.90

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 29/01/1996			
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED	PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	41750	231.500	272.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	1738	4.300	4.350
BANK OF JORDAN	1400	4.900	3.500
MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENT BANK	10228	1.180	1.180
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	3550	2.650	2.495
THE JORDAN BANK	11542	28880	2.460
JORDAN KIWAT BANK	3585	4.780	2.700
JORDAN GULF BANK	1000	2.710	2.710
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	10980	11371	1.030
AMMAN MABA FOR INVESTMENT	3340	12131	3.700
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	250	326	1.300
BANKS SECTOR	46297	121296	INDEX NUMBER: 284.38
			CHANGE: +0.29%
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	1000	2700	2.700
PHILADELPHIA INSURANCE	2500	21500	4.600
INSURANCE SECTOR	3526	14301	INDEX NUMBER: 129.02
			CHANGE: +0.00%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	8661	14563	1.680
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2145	2337	1.620
MACHINERY EQUIP. REPAIRING & MAINTENANCE	2100	1512	0.720
JORDAN PRICES REPAIRING & MAINTENANCE	100	100	10.250
AMMAN LEBAN. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	3007	10374	3.450
SARAKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1100	1266	1.150
UNITED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	700	1539	2.190
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	450	414	0.920
SERVICES SECTOR	18713	34080	INDEX NUMBER: 128.06
			CHANGE: +0.22%
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	10062	35919	3.580
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	100	317	3.170
THE ARAB POTASH	300	1632	5.420
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	122	2181	9.700
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	780	2920	3.750
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCK MILLS	250	1875	7.500
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	1878	9176	4.880
JORDAN TILES MANUFACTURING CO.	10000	21000	2.100
DAR AL INSA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	950	6745	7.050
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	3000	1660	0.550
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	900	1233	1.370
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	910	912	0.970
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1150	1633	1.400
UNIVERSAL SCIENCE INDUSTRIES	665	6650	1.000
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	3500	6507	1.860
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	7750	10314	1.330
THE JORDAN TILES MANUFACTURING CO.	10000	21000	2.100
JORDANIAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	30500	41595	1.360
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRIES	1068	1581	1.500
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	14959	150485	INDEX NUMBER: 120.48
			CHANGE: +0.17%
GRAND TOTAL	141055	330262	INDEX NUMBER: 147.57
			CHANGE: +0.06%
OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET			
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		79226	

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Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordan barter cement for 110,000 tonnes of Syrian barley

☆☆ UNDER A BARTER deal between Amman and Damascus, Jordan agreed to buy 110,000 tonnes of Syrian barley in exchange of cement valued at about \$20 million that the Jordan Cement Factories Company had already exported to Syria in the past. The agreed FOB (free on board) price was \$177.5 per tonne of barley with delivery from Deraa and Damascus silos. The price was \$26.5 per tonne lower than the international price and saved the treasury about \$4 million. Syria has expressed readiness to supply the Kingdom with more barley and lentils. The last time Jordan bought Syrian barley was in August 1995 at \$101 per tonne. International prices have risen sharply since then.

The barley will be trucked to Jordan soon by the Jordanian Syrian Land Transport Company. A tonne of barley will cost JD 170 until delivery at the warehouses of the Ministry of Supply. The government sells a tonne for JD 85 as it subsidizes the barley by JD 85 per tonne. Jordan consumes more than 600,000 tonnes of barley annually (Al Dustour).

Government to discuss remedial action for Cooperative Organisation this week

☆☆ THE GOVERNMENT is seriously considering seizing the Cooperative Organisation's funds, including the JD 8 million of debts owed by the organisation to government funding sources. With debtors still owing the organisation JD 6 million, the government will resort to collect the remaining JD 2 million from the organisation's fixed assets such as the investment and productive projects. Whatever the organisation has collected and will be collecting of debts, until the government arrives at a decision, is being put in a trust account at the Cooperative Bank and the organisation has no right to appropriate the funds.

Meanwhile, the privatisation of the cooperative sector has reached the final stage and a draft law amending the previous cooperative law has been presented to the cabinet for approval. A meeting between the prime minister and other responsible ministers along with the general manager of the Cooperative Organisation is expected to take place this week at the Prime Ministry. The meeting will put a remedial action to the situation of the organisation and discuss whether its funds should be seized and how its debts should be collected as well as the role of the organisation in cooperative functions with other parties (Al Dustour).

Fanek argues that exports to Iraq were not reduced

☆☆ ECONOMIC analyst Fahd Fanek has revealed that Jordan's exports to Iraq will not be much affected as exports valued at \$172 million were earmarked for last year but were not executed. As such, Dr. Fanek argues, the volume of exports for this year will be the amount of \$200 million agreed upon between the two countries plus the \$172 million of last year which were carried forward for implementation in 1996. Dr. Fanek further explained that it was not Iraq's imports only that heightened Baghdad's debts to Amman but the other factor was an accumulated \$381 million deficit in the amount of oil imports from Iraq. He expressed hope that Iraq will be able to resume oil exports to international markets this year and to improve its capability to import and thereby Jordan will be among the first to benefit of this change. Dr. Fanek emphasised that it was not Jordan's political will that waned against pressure to reduce the trade volume but rather its economic and financial strength that was lessened due to the increased Iraqi debt to the Central Bank (Al Ra'i).

Financial Markets

In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date: 26/1/96	Tokyo Close Date: 29/1/96
Sterling Pound	1.5025	1.5049**
Deutsche Mark	1.4915	1.4917
Swiss Franc	1.2107	1.2055**
French Franc	5.1345	5.1195**
Japanese Yen	106.63	106.93
European Currency Unit	1.2265	1.2280**

* 100 per cent
** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT

Source: Reuters

Date: 29/1/1996

Currency	1 MTR	3 MTR	6 MTR	12 MTR
U.S. Dollar	5.12	5.16	5.18	6.93
Sterling Pound	6.06	6.00	5.93	5.93
Deutsche Mark	3.12	3.18	3.06	3.06
Swiss Franc	1.50	1.50	1.58	1.50
French Franc	4.00	4.12	4.16	4.16
Japanese Yen	8.15	8.31	8.37	8.43
European Currency Unit	4.77	4.70	4.65	4.59

Source: Reuters

Date: 29/1/1996

Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7880	0.7109
Sterling Pound	1.0650	1.0703
Deutsche Mark	0.2747	0.2771
Swiss Franc	0.5852	0.5881
French Franc	0.1378	0.1385

Cowboys win Super Bowl

TEMPE, Arizona (AFP) — Dallas became only the second team to claim five Super Bowl titles with their victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers here on Sunday. But even the Cowboys admit it wasn't pretty.

The Cowboys had two interception returns by Larry Brown that set up touchdown runs by Emmitt Smith to beat the Steelers 27-17 and join San Francisco as the only five-time winners of the National Football League championship game.

Brown, overshadowed all week by his fellow corner-back Deion Sanders, was named most valuable player, the first defensive player to earn the honour in 10 years.

"I'm excited. Mostly I'm excited about winning the game," Brown said.

Brown had returns of 44 and 33 yards, a Super Bowl record for return yardage. Smith's ensuing touchdowns were the fourth and fifth Super Bowl touchdowns of his career, also a record.

When Brown intercepted Pittsburgh quarterback Neil O'Donnell for the second time and ran it back up the left sideline to the Pittsburgh seven yard-line, the Steelers had narrowed the gap to 20-17.

"When Larry got that last interception, all I could think about was putting my head down, getting into the Emmitt zone, and getting it into the end zone," said Smith.

Despite his two touchdowns, the Steelers were largely able to control Smith. He carried the ball 18 times for just 49 yards.

"Bottom line, we won the game, whether I got 50 or 100 yards, we won the game," he said. "I have a lot of respect for Pittsburgh's defense. They kept coming at us."

"It wasn't the prettiest game we played," said Dallas quarterback Troy Aikman. "Offensively, we didn't do as well in the second half. But a win is a win. The defense stepped up and made the key plays."

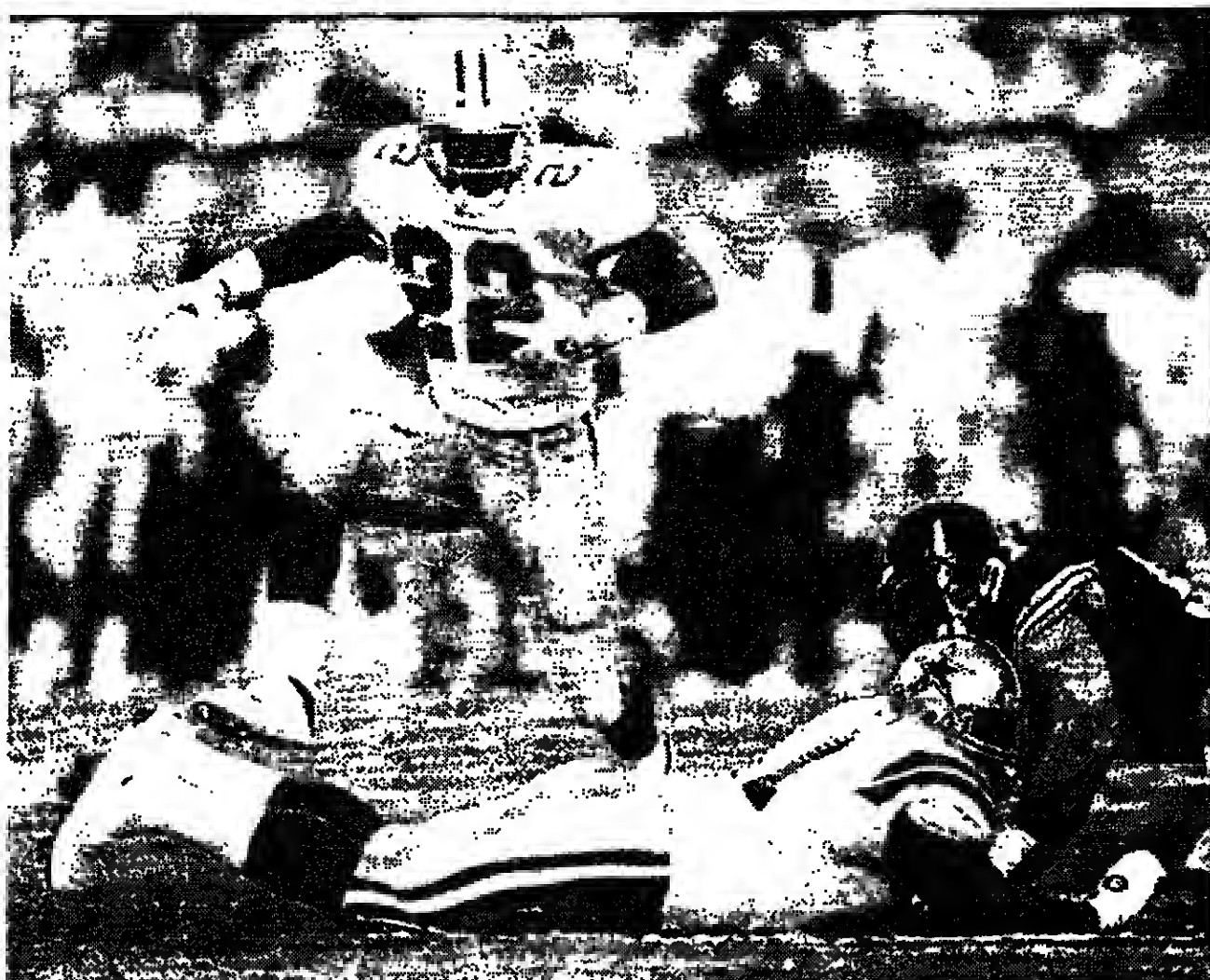
Dallas coach Barry Switzer said his defense won the game — especially Brown.

"The first one, he had a bad read and I was able to go get it," Brown said of his interceptions. "The second one, they ran a slant on me and I was in the right place. I got the ball and ran with it as far as I could."

"Our defense played exceptionally well," Switzer said. "They were exceptionally tired, especially at the end."

The Cowboys raced to a 13-0 lead with six minutes left in the first half, thanks to two field goals from Chris Boniol and Aikman's three-yard scoring pass to light-end Jay Novacek.

Pittsburgh finally got on the scoreboard with 13 seconds left in the half on O'Donnell's six-yard TD



Cowboy's running back Emmitt Smith runs over Pittsburgh Steelers' safety Darren Perry for a 23-yard gain in the first quarter of Super Bowl XXX (Reuters photo)



Dallas Cowboys' head coach Barry Switzer holds the Vince Lombardi trophy after the Cowboys defeated the Pittsburgh Steelers (Reuters photo)



Pittsburgh Steelers' Brentson Buckner sits dejected on his team's bench after Pittsburgh lost Super Bowl XXX 27-17 to the Dallas Cowboys (Reuters photo)

throw to Yancey Thigpen. Dallas took a 20-7 lead in the third after Brown's 44-yard interception return set up a one-yard run by Smith.

Pittsburgh responded with a 46-yard field goal by Norm Johnson. They followed that up with a surprise onside kick that led to Bam Morris' one-yard touchdown run that cut the lead to 20-17.

Deon Figures recovered the onside kick for the Steelers and O'Donnell completed two passes to Andre Hastings

to set up Morris' touchdown. Then came Brown's second interception.

"It was a hot read," O'Donnell said. "There was a little miscommunication between the wide receivers and the quarterback. But we're all in this together. We win together, and we lose together."

Pittsburgh outgained Dallas 310 yards to 254. It was only the second Super Bowl in which the team with the advantage in yards lost.

Award brightens dark season for Super Bowl MVP

TEMPE, Arizona (AFP) — When Larry Brown's infant son died last November, Brown found comfort on the football field with his Dallas teammates.

He decided to play despite his grief, and led the Cowboys with six regular season interceptions, two of which he returned for touchdowns.

He had one playoff interception and returned his two Super Bowl pickoffs a total of 77 yards — a Super Bowl record — to key Dallas' 27-17 victory over Pittsburgh here Sunday and earn most valuable player honors.

He became the first defender in 10 years to claim the honor, and only the second defensive back to win it.

"I didn't know," he said. "I didn't keep up with the state. I'm just happy that I won it. I'm happy that we won. I'm very excited to even be a part of those guys, legends like Marcus Allen, Emmitt Smith, Troy Aikman. I'm very excited about that."

Brown said he considered taking time off after his two-month-old son Kristopher died, then changed his mind.

"I felt like I needed to play," he said. "I had to get back in uniform and suit up. I didn't have to play. I want to make that very clear. The organization did not put any pressure on me."

"My family and I decided that it would be best if I played... and it worked out for me."

The team, Brown said, helped him through. "I could not have done it without them," he said. "They support me as we continue to move on and get through the tragedy. It stays in your mind. You've got to learn to move on."

Brown, who was a 12th-round choice, selected 33rd overall in the 1991 NFL draft, might not even have started at cornerback this season.

"He's a guy, you've got to think, if Kevin Smith would have been healthy at the beginning of the year, he might not be in this position. He probably wouldn't be in this position," teammate Scott Case said. "For things to turn out like that for him, it's a god-send."

Despite his outstanding season, Brown rarely gets the attention of his fellow cornerbacks Deion Sanders. But he doesn't mind.

"With Deion on the other side, it helps me stay focused," he said. "I know they're going to come at me, and I'm ready every play. Fortunately, I've been able to take advantage of it."

"My hat goes off to Dallas," Steelers coach Bill Cowher said. "They made the plays and we didn't. We fought, fought, fought. We weren't intimidated. We gave our best shot today. It wasn't good enough."

The Steelers were the 12th American Conference champions in a row to lose to the National Conference champs in the Super Bowl. The club lost the perfect record established in their four Super Bowl appearances in the

1970s, two of those wins coming over Dallas teams.

The Cowboys, who earned their third title in four years, were in the Super Bowl for a record eighth time. They also became the first club to win the title under three different coaches — Switzer, Jimmy Johnson and Tom Landry.

Switzer, leading his first Super Bowl team, said of the final 30 minutes of play: "It was 30 minutes of a lifetime to remember. I'm going to remember this one."

And then there was the super-fit Austrian Thomas Muster. Desperate to prove himself on any surface other than clay, who is now placed second in the rankings after Sampras' early exit and his own progress through to the last 16.

Muster, who won his first Grand Slam title on clay at last year's French Open, knows that despite the hard work that took him among the game's elite players, some of the top players do not believe he should be there.

"I've always had complaints about the ranking system," Agassi said after his fourth-round defeat of Swede Jonas Bjorkman in the \$6.35 million event. "I know that when I step on court I would fear playing

Milan remain three points clear

ROME (R) — Milan pulled ahead of their nearest rivals at the top of Serie A on Sunday when they won 2-0 at Udinese while second-placed Fiorentina and third-placed Parma both drew.

The results left Milan, unbeaten for 14 league matches, on 40 points, three clear of Fiorentina, held 1-1 at home by unfancied Vicenza in a night match, and five ahead of Parma, who drew 1-1 in Milan against Internazionale.

For a few hours on Sunday Milan led the table by four points, but Fiorentina lost the chance to cut that lead to just one point late on Sunday when Domenico di Carlo's equaliser for unfancied Vicenza denied Fiorentina a home win.

The veteran midfielder's first-ever goal in Serie A in the 46th minute cancelled out Argentine Gabriel Batistuta's 14th goal of the season, a thunderous shot in the seventh minute.

Third-placed Parma also lost ground, letting slip a first-half lead to draw 1-1 with Internazionale at the San Siro.

For much of a pulsating match, Parma looked like stealing all three-points after taking the lead through Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov,

finally showing the form that made him 1994 European Footballer of the Year.

But with seven minutes remaining, Marco Branca made amends for a first-half shot against the bar when he headed home Benito Carbone's cross from his ninth goal of the season.

Against Vicenza, Fiorentina started with the confidence of a side unbeaten in eight matches.

Batistuta immediately demonstrated his finishing prowess with a fierce right-foot shot from the edge of the area and defender Michele Serena narrowly failed to add a second, grazing the bar with another rasping strike.

But Vicenza weathered the storm and slowly worked their way back into the game, squandering several chances before equalising through Di Carlo's precise side-foot shot from the edge of penalty area.

Despite an unbeaten 14 match run stretching back to October, Milan's recent indifferent form — two wins in six matches — had raised question marks against their title credentials.

At Udinese, the first division leaders dismissed claims that their chances stand and fall on the skills of European

Footballer of the Year George Weah.

With the Liberian still absent in South Africa following Liberia's premature elimination from the African Nations Cup, and captain Franco Baresi out injured, Milan rarely looked in trouble against Udinese.

The visitors took command on the stroke of half-time.

Rising to meet a Roberto Baggio corner, Maldini's first effort was blocked by a defender but he made no mistake with his second it was the defender's 18th goal in 303 league matches.

After the break, Croat Zvonimir Boban, who as Milan's fourth foreigner has spent most of the season on the sidelines, exchanged a one-two with Baggio before sealing three-points with a clinical finish.

"We scored and that means that we are not dependent on Weah," said coach Fabio Capello afterwards.

"Fourth-placed Juventus kept alive their faint hopes of retaining the title with a 2-0 home win over struggling Piacenza. Antonio Conte's 34th minute header off Alessandro Del Piero's precise corner and Ciro Ferrara's spectacular overhead gave him victory.



Boris Becker

Becker rewrites script with victory

MELBOURNE (R) — It was supposed to be a year when arch rivals Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi would continue slugging it for the right to be called number one — but Boris Becker rewrote the script at the Australian Open.

The 28-year-old German's first Grand Slam title in five years has produced an intriguing scenario for 1996 with both Becker and his fellow open finalist, Michael Chang, hungry and in the mood to battle for top honours.

True, Agassi regained his number one ranking from Sampras in the year's first Grand Slam event when he came back from two sets down to heat old adversary Jim Courier in a dramatic quarter-final.

But, out of sons, the 25-year-old was humbled in straight sets in the semifinals by the lightning-quick Chang. More sensationally, top seed Sampras was blitzed in the third round by Australia's unseeded teenager Mark Philippoussis.

And then there was the super-fit Austrian Thomas Muster. Desperate to prove himself on any surface other than clay, who is now placed second in the rankings after Sampras' early exit and his own progress through to the last 16.

Muster, who won his first Grand Slam title on clay at last year's French Open, knows that despite the hard work that took him among the game's elite players, some of the top players do not believe he should be there.

"I've always had complaints about the ranking system," Agassi said after his fourth-round defeat of Swede Jonas Bjorkman in the \$6.35 million event.

"I know that when I step on court I would fear playing

Pete 99.9 per cent of the time more than Muster," added Agassi who believes Muster must prove himself by winning major tournaments away from his specialist surface.

Courier agreed with Agassi. "Until Thomas proves that he can win a Grand Slam on another surface other than clay, he's not the number one in my mind."

Muster, 28, much admired for his gritty comeback to the game after he was knocked down by a drunken driver in Miami seven years ago, responded to the broadside by announcing he would play the grass courts of Wimbledon this year.

"I'm going to play Wimbledon. I'm going to play queen's. I'm going to play Halle. I'm going to play three grass court tournaments," said the left-hander whose four Wimbledon appearances in his 11-year career have ended in the first round.

Sitting below the top three is a mature and relaxed Boris Becker, who broke his five-year Grand Slam drought and purged the demons that sent

him packing in the early rounds here after last winning the title in 1991.

Becker, who has now won six Grand Slams in a glittering 12-year career, believes he can win a few more before he puts away his racquet.

"I still believe I have a couple of big ones left in me. As long as I'm not embarrassing myself in shorts, then I'm going to do it," Becker said after his ruthlessly efficient four-set victory over Chang in Sunday's final.

Becker, who admits he is now in the autumn of his career, has an immediate goal to add the French Open to his three Wimbledon, two Australian and U.S. titles.

Beaten finalist, world number five Chang, went into the Open fit and confident he could end a seven-year Grand Slam drought since winning his only title, the French Open, as a raw 17-year-old.

With a longer racquet to help his serve, the diminutive American sailed through to the final, beating all before him in straight sets.

Leading ATP rankings

1. Andre Agassi (U.S.)	4,495
2. Thomas Muster (Austria)	4,474
3. Pete Sampras (U.S.)	4,465
4. Boris Becker (Germany)	4,297
5. Michael Chang (U.S.)	3,592
6. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia)	2,709
7. Thomas Enqvist (Sweden)	2,519
8. Jim Courier (U.S.)	2,400
9. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa)	2,144
10. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)	2,027
11. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands)	1,678
12. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)	1,666
13. Michael Stich (Germany)	1,619
14. Todd Martin (U.S.)	1,470
15. Arnaud Boetsch (France)	1,409
16. Marc Rosset (Switzerland)	1,391
17. Malivai Washington (U.S.)	1,317
18. Andrei Medvedev (Ukraine)	1,279
19. Gilbert Schaller (Austria)	1,256
20. Jan Siemerink (Netherlands)	1,209

Atletico Madrid stretch lead to nine points

MADRID (R) — Atletico Madrid stretched their lead at the top of the Spanish first division to nine points on Sunday with a convincing 4-1 home win over Athletic Bilbao.

Atletico dominated a rain-affected game, and had several clear chances before opening the scoring in the 14th minute when international striker Kiko Narvaez got on the end of a cross from Delfi Geli.

Athletic Bilbao equalised against the run of play on the half-hour when Joseba Etxeberria outjumped the Atleti-

co defence to head home a free-kick.

But a superbly-curved free-kick from Serbian set-piece specialist Milinko Pantic restored Atletico's lead just before half-time, and after the break Atletico overwhelmed a disorganised and dispirited Athletic Bilbao side.

Lyuboslav Penev was brought down in the area on the hour, and the Bulgarian striker converted the spot-kick himself to make it 3-1.

Shortly afterwards Argentine midfielder Leonardo Biagini replaced Penev, and scored a simple goal with only his

second touch after a run by Jose Luis Caminero had caused chaos in the Athletic defence.

The result puts Athletic's Dragoslav Stepanovic in danger of becoming the tenth first division manager to lose his job this season in Spain. The Athletic board had already decided to discuss the Serbian's future after the 5-1 thrashing by Real Madrid last Wednesday.

Real Madrid's new coach Arsenio Iglesias made a successful debut at Real Oviedo, where teenage striker Raul

Gonzalez scored an 82nd minute goal to give his side a hard-fought 2-1 victory which leaves Real in sixth place, 16 points behind Atletico.

Espanyol's 0-0 draw at Albacete means they slip to third on goal difference behind Barcelona, who were inspired by an outstanding performance by teenage midfielder Ivan de La Pena in their 3-1 home win over Zaragoza.

De La Pena's scored twice, and his second, a lobbed goal from the centre circle, put the entire Camp Nou Stadium on

its feet.

Compostela lost their unbeaten home record in the 3-1 defeat by bottom club Valladolid, and give up fourth place to Valencia, who won 4-1 at home against struggling Merida, with two goals from Montenegrin midfielder Predrag Mijatovic.

Real Betis could only manage a 1-0 draw at home to Rayo Vallecano, and slip to eighth. Deportivo Coruna move up to seventh after playing the best football of the weekend in Saturday's 5-1 victory at Salamanca.

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CONCORD "2"
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Seles back to Tokyo

TOKYO (AFP) — Monica Seles, fresh from her victory in the Australian Open in Melbourne, said Monday she was looking forward to this week's Toray Pan Pacific Open.

"The last time I was here was in 1991. Unfortunately, I couldn't play, because I got injured. So I'm very excited about coming back to Japan. I always played some great tennis here," said Seles.

Seles pulled out of the 1991 indoor tournament without hitting a ball, while winning an outdoor event twice in 1991 and 1992 here.

"We have a very strong field this year, lot of us coming after the Australian Open. I think we played some great matches there," said the world co-number one, who captured her ninth Grand Slam title in Melbourne on Saturday in the absence of her archrival Steffi Graf of Germany.

Seles' major rivals this week include Spaniards Conchita Martinez, the 1994 Wimbledon champion, and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Japanese tennis queen and defending champion Kimiko Date, and Magdalene Maleeva of Bulgaria.

Three-time champion Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina, Iva Majoli of Croatia, Lindsay Davenport of the United States and Martina Hingis of Switzerland are also expected to pose threats.

However, Hingis, visiting Tokyo for the first time, was drawn against a tough first-round opponent — sixth-seeded Sabatini — on Tuesday.

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♥ 7 2
♦ 3
♣ Q J 10 7 4

WEST
♠ K
♥ A Q 8 5
♦ Q J 10 9 5 2
♣ 8 2

EAST
♠ 6 3
♥ K 10 6 4
♦ A K 8 5 4
♣ A 6 5

SOUTH
♠ A Q 10 9 7 2
♥ 2 9
♦ 7
♣ A K 9 2

The bidding:
East South West North
Pass 1a 20 2a
4c Pass

Opening lead: Queen of ♠
Follow the bidding and play of this deal from a rubber bridge game. Your task is to decide who made errors, if any, and how severe were the mistakes.

South brushed aside East's jump to four diamonds to bid four spades. West could see no reason to compete despite the six-card diamond suit — the king of spades looked like a sure trick on defense so there was a fair chance that four spades would fail.

West led the queen of diamonds, overtaken by East with the king for a heart shift. West took two heart tricks with the queen and ace, then shifted to a club. That was no in dummy and the jack of spades was run to West's king — down one.

Who perpetrated what?
There are those who might give East a charge for bidding four diamonds rather than cue-bidding three spades to show a stronger diamond raise, and for not sacrificing at five diamonds — partner must surely have a six-card suit to overcall at the two-level, vulnerable, on a suit headed at best by the queen-jack. The major blame, however, attaches to South for failing to make the contract.

East, a passed hand, was known to have started with the ace-king-jack of diamonds and king of hearts — holding the three top hearts. West would surely have led that suit in preference to the queen of diamonds. With the guarded king of spades as well, East would never have dreamed of passing on the first round. That card, therefore, was marked with West, so declarer should have shot up with the ace of trumps on the first lead of the suit in the hope that the king was singleton. Q.E.D.

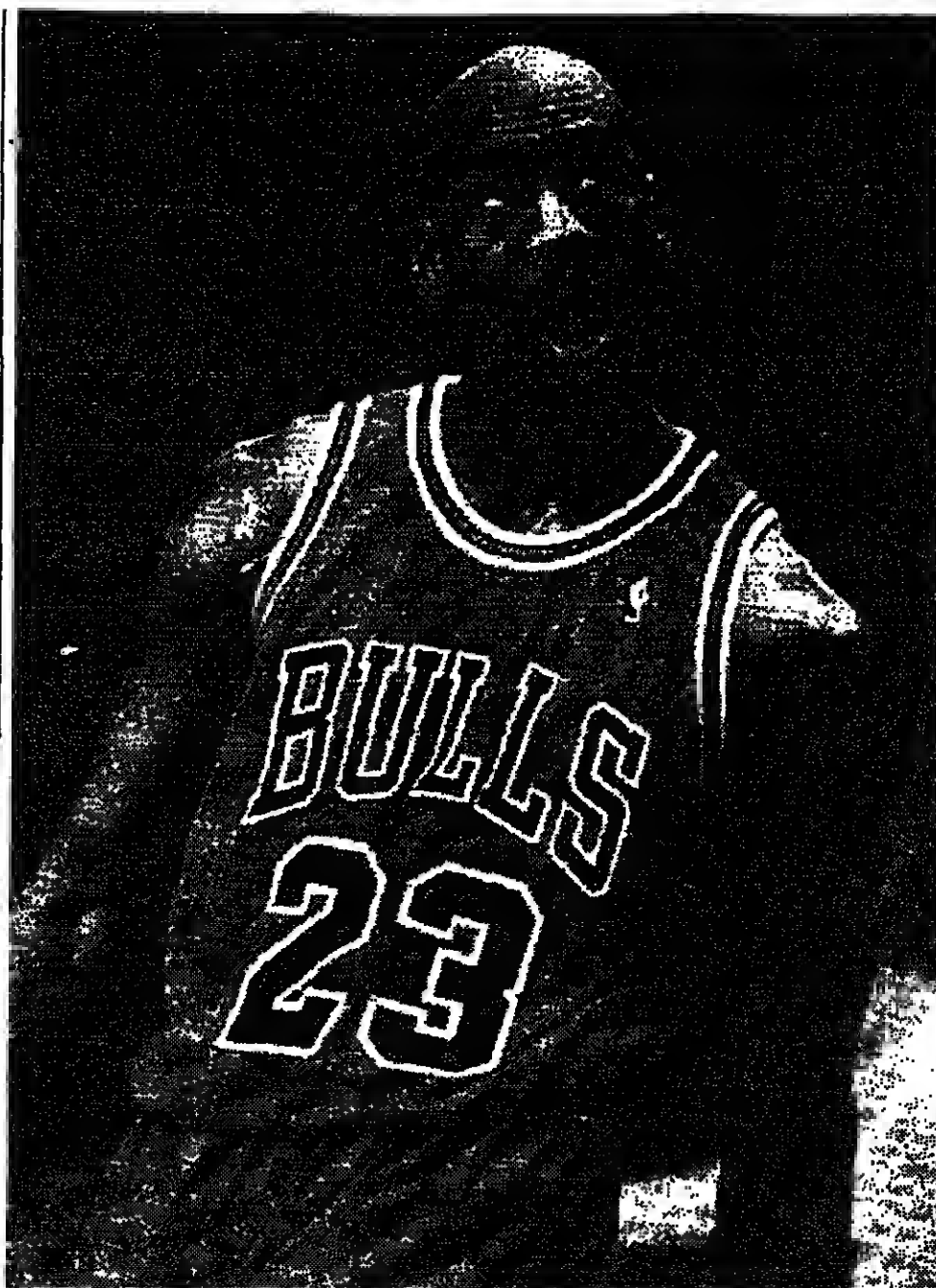
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Michael Jordan

Bulls set club record by setting down the Suns

CHICAGO (R) — Michael Jordan scored 31 points and Scottie Pippen had 10 of his 21 in the third quarter as the Chicago Bulls won a club record 15th straight game with a 93-82 victory Sunday over the Phoenix Suns.

The rampaging Bulls improved to 22-0 at home this season and moved to within one game of the 1971-72 Lakers for the best start in NBA history as they improved to 38-3.

The Bulls trailed 52-47 at halftime, but took control in the third period behind Pippen, who gave Chicago their first lead at 60-59 with 4:55 left on a layup. Jordan scored nine points in the quarter as Chicago took a 71-68 advantage.

"Defense is certainly what allows us to keep winning in this league," Bulls coach Phil Jackson said. "We've had two sub-par offensive games in a row. But because of our

defensive skills and hard work, we were able to defeat our opponents."

Charles Barkley finished with 20 points and 16 rebounds and rookie Michael Finley had 16 for the Suns, who had their two-game winning streak snapped.

"We played an intelligent game," Suns coach Cotton Fitzsimmons said. "But with those three all-star defensive players (Jordan, Pippen and Dennis Rodman) they were able to shut us down just enough in the second half to take the game back."

"You have three-fifths of an all-star team out there every night for the Bulls and they're deep on the bench. They will be tough to beat this year."

Chicago extended their lead to nine points in the fourth quarter opening the final period with a 6-0 run. Pippen sank two free throws and Jud Buechler hit a 16-

footer before Toni Kukoc had a driving layup for a 77-68 lead with 10:27 to play.

The Suns pulled to within five points on a jumper by Finley, but Phoenix got no closer and the Bulls boosted the cushion to 11 points with 1:04 left on a slam dunk by Jordan.

"We were not prepared to play the first half. We were lethargic and lucky not to get blown out," Jordan said. In the second half, both our offensive and defensive intensities increased. We were able to put the game away."

Jordan hit on 13-of-25 shots from the floor and Rodman added 20 rebounds for Chicago, who won the battle of the boards 50-36. The Bulls clamped down on the Suns in the second half as Phoenix made just 11-of-41 (26 per cent) of their shots.

"Give them credit," Barkley said. "They shut us down in the second half."

Rare Manchester derby possible in F.A. Cup

LONDON (R) — The draw for the fifth round threw up the possibility on Sunday of a rare F.A. Cup derby between Manchester United and Manchester City.

The pairings for the last 16 went ahead even though only two fourth round ties have been decided and the names of 30 teams went into the pot. Manchester United will play city for only the fifth time in the Cup's 124-year history if City heat Coventry in their postponed fourth round tie.

The previous four Manchester Cup derbies have ended in two fourth round ties for each side, with city victorious in 1926 and 1955, and United winning in 1970 and 1987.

If Coventry win, it will mean a return to Old Trafford for their manager Ron Atkinson, who managed Manchester United to F.A. Cup wins in 1983 and 1985. Aston Villa, who beat first division Sheffield United 1-0 on Sunday to become the only other team sure of a place in the last 16, will visit either First Division Ipswich

or Second Division Walsall.

Cup holders Everton, who were held to a 2-2 home draw by First Division Port Vale on Saturday, will visit the winner of the postponed Bolton-Leeds tie if they win their replay at Vale Park.

Celtic win in Scottish Cup

In Glasgow, holders Celtic failed to match the cup goal-scoring achievements of their arch-rivals Rangers when they beat part-timers Whitehill Welfare 3-0 on Sunday to move into the fourth round of the Scottish Cup.

On Saturday Rangers thrashed Highland League par-timers Keith 10-1, but Celtic never enjoyed that kind of goalscoring freedom over their opponents at Hibernian's Easter road ground.

They had to wait 39 anxious minutes for their first goal and the second did not come until 14 minutes from time against the village side whose players earn three pounds sterling (\$4.20) for playing in the east of Scotland League.

Dutchman Pierre Van

Hooydonk, whose goal won Celtic's first trophy in six years last May, did the damage to breach the stubborn resistance of goalkeeper Scott Cantley, who works as a postman.

But Celtic had an anxious wait before substitute Simon Donnelly's 76th minute second made sure as Whitehill continued to dream of a replay before Van Hooydonk netted his second.

Celtic dominated the match and forced plenty of chances, but Cantley denied them time and again with some superb saves.

Whitehill substitute Ricky Smith enjoyed a 72nd minute chance to put his side level, but Celtic survived that, and a couple of other scares, to earn a home fourth round meeting with Raith Rovers.

After Highland League Keith's ignominious 10-1 hiding at the hands of Rangers on Saturday, Whitehill were undoubtedly crowned Scotland's Cup Minnows for 1996.

Defeat is not something Whitehill are used to. Last week they surrendered 42 match unbeaten run.

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Porto still unbeaten

LISBON (R) — Unbeaten Porto scored two own goals but still beat lowly Chaves 3-2 on Sunday and retained a commanding lead in the Portuguese first division.

Lisbon Sporting, ending their match with nine players, dropped two places to fourth in the table after losing 1-0 at home to Braga in their third consecutive defeat.

Sporting president Pedro Santana Lopes said the club was discussing the future of manager Carlos Queiroz but denied it had decided to dismiss him.

"When a decision is taken, which should be before training tomorrow morning, Carlos Queiroz will be the first to know," Santana Lopes told reporters after a meeting of Sporting's senior management that lasted more than five hours.

Benfica moved up to second place with 43 points, 11 behind Porto, by beating Guimaraes 4-2 away on Saturday after training by two goals at half-time.

Boavista, who drew 1-1 away against Gil Vicente on Sunday, moved up to third place with 41 points, ahead of Sporting with 40.

Porto's Serbian winger Ljubinko Drulovic gave a splendid performance against Chaves, scoring their first two goals in the 18th and 53rd minutes and setting up striker Domingos Oliveira to score the winner in the 74th minute.

But Porto were embarrassed by defender Aloisio Alves, who knocked the ball into his own net in the 47th minute, and Carlos Secretario, who looked more like a Chaves striker than a Porto defender when he headed in an own goal in the 60th minute.

1st Division Basketball Championship Final round begins today

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The start of the final round of First Division Basketball Championship Tuesday is anxiously awaited by basketball fans who are witnessing the most interesting competition in years.

For the first time in decades the first round was concluded with three teams tied in overall points. Based on score difference tieholders Al Ahli are first, Al Jazireh second and Al Orthodoxy third.

For the past twenty years fans had been accustomed to the fact that Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxy would easily beat all their opponents and the final match between the all-time rivals would decide the winner.

However, this season has been quite different.

Al Ahli entered the competition defying any team to attempt to end their current reign for the next five years.

Although missing key players like Naser Bushnaq, Samir Murqus, Walid Badran, Sami Sa'dulain and Zeid Alkhas, they nevertheless boasted a mighty lineup led by veterans Marwan Ma'touq and Yousef Zaghloul.

However Al Ahli stumbled, not against their all-time rivals Al Orthodoxy, but against last year's third-placed Al Jazireh.

Although Al Jazireh had given former champions Al Orthodoxy a hard time before losing 72-66, they shocked Al Ahli's fans with their unexpected 76-73 win over the titleholders.

Basketball officials were delighted that a new team was seriously challenging the top two teams when Al Jazireh changed the nature of the competition as it became a three-way race.

Al Jazireh's win gave Al Orthodoxy a perfect opportunity to take the first round lead and end Al Ahli's hope of winning the trophy for the fourth consecutive year.

However, in the first round final last Friday, Al Orthodoxy could not capitalise on the situation and lost to Al Ahli 90-76.

The top three teams now enter the second round with one defeat each. Their upcoming matches will all be crucial on determining the eventual champion. Jazireh-Orthodoxy, Feb. 3, Ahli-Jazireh, Feb. 8 and Ahli-Orthodoxy Feb. 15 are all matches eagerly awaited by fans and officials.

Fourth placed Al Jalil

and fifth placed winless Al Watani have displayed that they have not seriously prepared for the competition and the fact that they are not threatened by relegation adds to their indifference.

The sixth team, Al Abbasi, the sole team representing the Governorate of Zarqa, became the only team to be relegated when they withdrew prior to the competition.

According to the competition rules if two teams tie for first place a three-match playoff will decide the winner. If however, more than two teams tie, a one round playoff will be played to determine the champion.

First round results

Jazireh-Jalil	60-40
Ahli-Watani	121-41
Orthodoxy-Jazireh	72-66
Jalil-Watani	84-57
Ahli-Jalil	76-54
Orthodoxy-Watani	133-65
Jazireh-Ahli	76-73
Orthodoxy-Jalil	80-50
Jazireh-Watani	100-59
Ahli-Orthodoxy	90-76

Final round schedule

(All matches start at 7 p.m.)

Jalil-Jazireh	Tue. 30/1 (Irbid)
Watani-Ahli	Tue. 30/1 (Sports Palace)
Jalil-Watani	Friday 2/2 (Irbid)
Jazireh-Orthodoxy	Friday 2/2 (Sports Palace)
Orthodoxy-Watani	4/2 (Orthodoxy)
Jalil-Ahli	Sun. 4/2 (Irbid)
Jazireh-Ahli	Thurs. 8/2 (Sports Palace)
Orthodoxy-Jalil	Sat. 10/2 (Orthodoxy)
Watani-Jazireh	Wed. 14/2 (Sports Palace)
Ahli-Orthodoxy	Thurs. 15/2 (Sports Palace)

Standings before final round

	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Ahli	3	1	360	247	7
Jazireh	3	1	302	244	7
Orthodoxy	3	1	361	271	7
Jalil	1	3	228	273	5
Watani	-	4	222	438	4

African Nations' Cup

Ghana meet S. Africa, Tunisia face Zambia in semifinals today

JOHANNESBURG (AFP)

Sean Bartlett is definitely in South Africa's semi-final starting line-up, coach Clive Barker revealed here on Monday as he put his team through their paces in training.

First-choice striker Phil Masinga received a second yellow card in their 2-1 quarter-final win over Algeria on Saturday to rule himself out of Wednesday's African Nations Cup semi-final against Ghana.

Barker, who did not reveal other changes, said Bartlett, of Cape Town Spurs, would come in and Sundown's Daniel Mudau would be promoted to the bench.

"Bartlett probably thought he would never start a match, and Mudau thought he wouldn't be on the bench, but it's all changed now," he said.

Barker, who has asked for the team to have privacy at their hotel from now on, hinted he might man-mark Anthony Yehouah or Abedi Pele, should Pele recover from a twisted ankle.

However Pele's inclusion was important to Barker. "Pele is a class act and I would be disappointed if he did not play against us." Despite the respect Barker said his side would give Ghana, he added: "They are not Brazil. They started the tournament

magnificently, but now they have fallen off a little. But we have made steady improvement."

Both Neil Tovey and Lucas Radebe have picked up yellow cards and Barker urged caution in their play in order not to rule them out of a possible final.

And on whether his side could cope with the pressure, Barker said: "It's been great pressure, but a nice pressure. How would we be handling the pressure if we were going home. That would be horrible."

"Let's hope we can go one step further and reach the final. But whatever happens, we are without doubt one of the best teams in Africa."

Tunisia reach semifinals

In Durban, Tunisia booked a semifinal tie against Zambia in the African Nations' Cup when they beat Gabon 4-1 on penalties after the two sides battled through extra time to a 1-1 draw on Sunday.

Gabon, who had dominated the quarter-final with skillful, flowing football, came unstuck when they missed their first two penalties. Chokri El Ouassani saving from Brice Mackaya and Etienne Kassa-Ngomla hitting a post. Aurelien Bikogo-Zolo did score for Gabon but by then some sharp shooting from

Adel Sellimi, Soufyane Pekih and Mehdi Slimane meant that goalkeeper and captain El Ouassani was able to seal the match when he scored with Tunisia's fourth penalty.

It was a disappointing end for a Gabon side who had charmed the small King's Park crowd and outshone a dull Tunisian team with some bright, attractive football.

Wash fined: Liberia's football federation was fined \$200 after world footballer of the year George Weah wore a different number shirt to the one on the official team list, organisers said on Monday. Weah, who was down to wear the number nine shirt, switched to his favoured number 14 for their 2-1 win over Gabon.

Fish donates money: South African defender Mark Fish, the official man-of-the-match against Algeria, has given his 1,500-rand (\$500) prize money to a children's charity, organisers revealed on Monday. Fish, the target of scouts from Europe, scored the first goal to their 2-1 quarter-final win over Algeria.

Uncle Sam beckons for SA players: Cape town Spurs players Sean Bartlett and Andre Arendse might be off to play in the United States, according to the Sowetan newspaper. Spurs boss David Rodwell said representatives from the Major League Soccer (MLS) had contacted him over a possible deal with the two South African players.

Should keeper Arendse and striker Bartlett complete a deal, they would follow in the footsteps of midfielder Doctor Khumalo, who has already joined Ohio's Columbus Crew. Barker's team to keep feet on ground: South Africa coach Clive Barker promised his side would not be overawed in their semi-final against Ghana on Wednesday. "We think we can beat Ghana, but not by being cocky or petulant teenagers with big heads." He added it was important not to think Ghana were better than they actually were.

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Iraq is 'keen' to work with Syria on water dispute

CAIRO (Agencies) — Baghdad is keen to work with Syria to try to solve a dispute with Turkey over water supplies from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Iraq's representative to the Arab League said on Monday.

"Iraq is very eager to cooperate with its sister country Syria in the waters affair, as well as with Turkey on the basis of good neighbourliness," Nabil Nejm told journalists.

Syrian and Iraqi experts will meet on Feb. 10 to discuss the water issue, said Mr. Nejm, who met Monday with Arab League Secretary General Esmar Abdul Meguid.

But he said "there was still no response" from Syria to an Iraqi request for a meeting on the issue between the two countries' foreign ministers under the league's auspices.

Baghdad and Damascus broke diplomatic relations in 1980 after Syria took Iraq's side in the Iran-Iraq war. Syria participated in the international coalition which forced Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

The issue of the Tigris-Euphrates waters will be brought up at the next meeting of league foreign ministers in May, Mr. Nejm said.

Turkey has angered both countries with its plans for a \$30 billion irrigation and hydroelectricity project involving the construction of 22 dams and 19 power plants along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Syria and Iraq, both driven from Turkey, complain the projects will contaminate the river waters and lead to a drop in their level.

On Sunday an Iraqi newspaper predicted Syria would

"respond favourably" to Iraq's call for reconciliation between the two countries.

Iraq and Syria are led by rival branches of the Baath party.

Haj funds sought

Iraq asked Arab states Monday to release \$50 million in assets frozen since 1990 to fund the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Mr. Nejm said.

"We have asked the Arab League to intercede on our behalf in this request in order to ensure the goods and expenses of Iraqi pilgrims travelling to Mecca for the annual Haj later this year," Mr. Nejm told journalists.

Mr. Nejm said that Arab countries were holding \$1.2 billion in frozen Iraqi assets.

League sources said the Iraqi request focused on Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Iraq's assets abroad have been frozen since it invaded and occupied Kuwait in August 1990.

Mr. Nejm said he also complained to Dr. Abdul Meguid of "the continuing danger of overflights (over Iraq) by allied planes, especially American and British."

He said some 500 allied air sorties had been made over Iraq in the first half of January and there had been a total of 70,000 sorties following the ouster of Iraqi troops from Kuwait in the 1991 war.

Iraqi dinar steady

The Iraqi dinar has stabilised against the U.S. dollar after regaining more than 60 per cent of its value since Baghdad agreed to talks with



PROTEST OVER SILENCE: Police in the north-western Bosnian town of Tuzla restrain Bosnian Muslim males who have been missing since the fall of Srebrenica to Bosnian Serbs in July (See story on page one) (AFP photo)

Husseini: Palestinians stronger on Jerusalem

CAIRO (AFP) — The Palestinians hold a stronger position than ever in negotiations with Israel on Jerusalem, the Palestinians' unofficial minister for the Holy City said in an interview published Monday.

"Our negotiating position for Jerusalem, after the withdrawal of Israeli troops from West Bank towns, is very strong," Faisal Husseini told the Egyptian government daily Al-Ahram.

"The Israelis' only option is to reach an agreement on Jerusalem if they want to live in peace. So it is only a matter of time," Mr. Husseini said from Orient House, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) unofficial headquarters in East Jerusalem.

"Would it have been better to negotiate on Jerusalem from Tunis or from Jerusalem's doorstep?" Mr. Husseini said, referring to the move of the Palestinian administration from its old headquarters in Tunis to the Palestinian self-ruled areas.

Israel and the Palestinians are to begin talks on the future of Jerusalem as part of negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories in May.

Mr. Husseini said "unofficial contacts" have already begun preceding the negotiations, in the form of "a lot of pulse-taking and expressions of opinion." (The Israelis) have put out numerous suggestions through intermediaries.

King Fahd appoints finance minister

RIYADH (AFP) — King Fahd on Monday named Ibrahim Ben Abdul Aziz Al Assaf, a former deputy governor of the central bank, to fill the vacant post of finance minister, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

Mr. Assaf replaced Sulaiman Ben Abdul Aziz Al Salim, who served as finance minister from last July until October when he stepped down citing health reasons. He had been commerce minister since 1975.

Mr. Assaf was minister of state without portfolio and deputy governor of the central bank in 1995. During the 1980s, he represented the kingdom in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Another minister of state without portfolio, Abdul Aziz Al Khawarizmi, served as interim finance minister after Mr. Salim resigned.

Rabin assassin's arrest reenacted

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Yigal Amir, the confessed assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, was flung to the ground by a police officer in front of a startled courtroom here Monday as the two men reconstructed the killing.

Amir, conducting his own defence after his legal team collapsed in disarray, was handed the gun used to shoot Mr. Rabin by state prosecutor Pnina Gai as the police officer who arrested him on the night of the killing crept up behind him.

Inspector Yitzhak Yamin then threw 25-year-old Amir roughly to the floor to cries of shock from the rest of the courtroom.

"You don't have to carry out the demonstration with so much realism," Judge Edmond Levy told the policeman.

But an unruffled Amir proceeded to calmly cross-examine prosecution witnesses in his trial on charges of premeditated murder and assault as his lawyer Jonathan Ray Goldberg sat back and listened.

Judge Levy, ruling that law student Amir had "no defence worthy of its name," has decided to appoint him a second lawyer at public expense.

"Justice has to be done, but we can't forget that the accused has the right to an honourable defence," Judge Levy said.

However, he apologised to Mr. Goldberg for thundering that he had never seen such a "pitiful defence" on Sunday.

"It was not meant to offend you personally," Mr. Levy told the lawyer.

Mr. Goldberg, who talked in hesitant Hebrew and had not seemed to have mastered the peculiarities of Israeli law, agreed to work with a court-appointed lawyer.

Mr. Rabin's bodyguard Yoram Rubin also took the stand Sunday to reenact the events of the night of the premier's murder at a peace rally in Tel Aviv on Nov. 4. Rubin, injured during the

shooting, showed the court how he protected Mr. Rabin after the first gunshot by wrapping his arms around him and pressing him to the ground.

"I then whispered in his ear: only listen to my instructions," he said, telling how he was hit in the arm by a third shot from Amir.

Amir has said he only meant to paralyse Mr. Rabin, not kill him, to stop his peace moves with the Arabs. Premeditated murder carries a penalty of life imprisonment. Manslaughter carries a maximum 20-year sentence.

Court officials gave Amir the barett pistol he used to shoot Mr. Rabin, first ejecting the ammunition cartridge. He pointed the gun as if shooting at someone.

Mr. Yamin came from behind. With one hand Mr. Yamin grabbed Amir's neck and with the other he seized Amir's right hand which held the pistol, twisted it behind Amir's back and knocked Amir down, falling with him onto the floor.

Mr. Yamin told the court that after he had Amir's gun and during the ensuing chaos an Israeli Shin Bet secret service man tried in turn to grab it from him but he managed to hold on to it.

Amir told the court: "People jumped on me after I shot the first bullet and pushed my arm. Only after that did I fire the other two shots. I have no doubt about this."

Dr. Yoram Kluger, who treated Mr. Rabin after he was shot, later told the court the first bullet killed the prime minister.

"The first bullet was the deadly one because it penetrated his lung and we know Rabin died of asphyxiation," he said.

Another police witness, Avi Sasson, told the court he asked Amir on the night of the killing about his sanity.

"I asked him, 'are you sane?' and he said: 'it's important to me for people to know that I am not crazy, otherwise I will not have achieved my goal.'"

Diana sought to play Queen Victoria in film

TOKYO (AFP) — A Japanese film-maker is trying to get Britain's Princess Diana to play the role of Queen Victoria in a Sino-Japanese movie on Britain's opium wars with China, a company spokesman said Monday. The spokesman for Daiji KK said Yasuyoshi Tokuma, the president of the film production company, had "started negotiations for Princess Di's appearance" in the movie to be jointly made with Chinese director Xie Jin. "Princess Diana is most suited to the role of Queen Victoria because of her beauty and fame," the spokesman said. He added that if she refused the offer, the role of Queen Victoria would be written out of the script. The film, *The Great Opium War*, is expected to be released in June next year, coinciding with Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule on July 1, he said.

Britain fought two opium wars with China. The first in 1839-42 led to Britain's winning control of Hong Kong and the opening of five treaty ports in China. The second, 1856-60, led to the burning of the summer palace in Beijing by a Franco-British army and the opening of more treaty ports as well as the legalisation of the sale of opium in China by Western, predominantly British, traders.

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Madness Of King George wins 3 prizes

LONDON (AFP) — Nicholas Hytner's film *The Madness Of King George* received three prizes Sunday from the jury of the annual Evening Standard Awards for the British film industry. It won the awards for best film, best screenplay for author Alan Bennett and best technical direction for Andrew Dunn. But star Nigel Hawthorne, the favourite to take the best actor award for his portrayal of the deranged late 18th century British monarch, finally lost out to Jonathan Pryce, who played the homosexual author Lytton Strachey in Christopher Hampton's *Carrington*. Pryce had already been named best actor for the same role at last year's Cannes Film Festival. Kristin Scott Thomas was judged best actress, for her role in *Angels And Insects*, for the second year running. Last year she won the same award for *Four Weddings And A Funeral*.

Witnesses said a warplane dropped bombs in the presidential palace area, but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), quoting its sources in Kabul, said four people were killed and eight wounded by a bomb dropped in Kabul's Pul-e-Mahmood Khan area.

It said there could be more casualties.

Earlier in the day, five rockets were fired at the presidential palace in central Kabul, killing one person and wounding three, security sources said.

Two factions opposed to President Burhanuddin Rabbani are equipped with warplanes — the Taliban militia and General Abdul Rashid Dostum's Junbish-e-Milli group. It was not immediately clear which had carried out the bombing raid.

Defence Ministry officials blamed the attacks on the Taliban militia, which has been encamped around the capital for more than four months.

The attacks marked the collapse of a nine-day-old ceasefire the government offered at the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan on Jan. 21 and which was rejected by the Afghan opposition, including the Taliban.

"The Taliban know that they cannot achieve anything with this air raid but they want to subvert U.N. special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri's peace mission and discourage him not to visit Kabul," a Defence Ministry official said.

Mr. Mestiri, who last visited Kabul on Jan. 18, is due here on Tuesday for talks with the government leaders.

The Taliban warriors appeared on the scene from religious schools in southern Afghanistan and Pakistan more than a year ago.

Funniest film at Brussels Festival

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The British film *Funniest Film* by Peter Chelsom took the Crystal Star Award for best European film at the end of Brussels' 23rd International Film Festival, organisers announced. The 120,000 ECU (\$150,000) trophy was awarded by festival guest of honour, American actor-director Tim Robbins, who earlier received a "Crystal Iris" for his career accomplishments. *Funniest Film* also won the 24,000 ECU (\$31,200) Audience Award, chosen by a 10-person jury, which is designed to promote the film in Belgium. The festival named Germany's Peter Fitz best European actor for his role in Hans-Christoph Blumeborg's film "Beim Nachehsten Kuess Knall Ich Ihn Nieder." (One More Kiss And He's Dead). Best European actress award went to Sandrine Kiberlain for her role in Lætitia Masson's "En Avoir (Ou Pas)." Ten feature films competed in the 10-day festival.

SLA post escapes carbomb

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (Agencies) — A car packed with some 200 kilograms of explosives blew up on Monday near an Israeli-backed militia post in South Lebanon just north of the border with Israel, pro-Israeli militia sources said.

The car exploded near a post manned by South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia near the village of Markaba in Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone about 500 metres from the Lebanon-Israel border, the SLA sources said.

They said the blast may have killed two passengers inside the car but no SLA members were hurt. The explosion caused a crater five metres deep and six metres wide.

The owner of the car was arrested by SLA militiamen and he said that gunmen had forced him to give up his car.

Guerrillas launch attacks almost daily against Israeli and SLA targets in the zone set up by Israel.

Israeli army experts were Monday shifting through the remains of the Mercedes car, which an SLA officer said had had a driver in it. But an AFP correspondent was unable to find any human traces among the debris, most of which was no larger than first size.

Tunisians among killed

Two Tunisians were among the four members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command who were killed by Israeli soldiers in South Lebanon, the group said Sunday.

The Damascus-based group named the pair as Kamal Saudi Badri and Baligh Mohammad Anwa Al Jammi, who were killed Saturday along with two Palestinians from the West Bank town of Hebron and Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria.

They were killed by an Israeli army patrol as they tried to infiltrate the Israeli-occupied zone in South Lebanon.

"The mixture of blood from the sons of the Maghreb, from the Yarmouk camp in Syria and from the occupied territories proves that the people will continue to sacrifice themselves to obtain Arab goals, despite the treason of their leaders," the PFLP-GC said in a statement.

Jordan was not a factor in Palestinian polls — experts

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Top Palestinian experts believe that the composition of the newly-elected Palestinian council reflects the fact that the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship did not figure at all in the Jan. 20 elections.

According to the specialists, the outcome showed that Palestinian candidates who sympathise with Jordan or have any kind of relationship with the Kingdom were not elected to the 88-member council.

In a seminar organised by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, three Palestinian specialists representing different political shades regretted the lack of concern for the "special relationship" that the new entity should have with Jordan but attributed it to psychological reasons.

"The council includes two, maximum three members who sympathise with Jordan. However, none of them will dare say they do (have or want a relationship with the Kingdom)," said Khalil Shaqqa, president of the Nabulus-based Centre for Palestinian Studies and Research. "The majority of the Palestinian national movement believes

that the relationship should be based on equal footing between the two peoples."

In fact, candidates during the elections refrained from raising slogans or even mentioning anything related to Jordan or to the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, according to Mr. Shaqqa. None of those who were known to have ties with Amman made it to the legislative council, he said.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) mainstream movement, Fateh, has 49 members in the council; pro-Fateh members are 23, independent nationalists 10 and independent Islamists six, according to Mr. Shaqqa.

According to Mr. Shaqqa, 19 of the 72 Fateh members and sympathisers could be considered as "a rebel movement" within the mainstream group. Counting five other independent nationalists and two independent Islamists, opposition within the council could reach 27 members.

"This is not much. There is no real opposition per se that could hamper the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA) from passing what it wants," Mr. Shaqqa said. "But that does not mean that the elections were not fair and free."

Mahdi Abdul Hadi from

the Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs argued that the council was the first real manifestation of democracy and represented a challenge to the Palestinian people who have not achieved full independence.

Riad Malki, president of the Jerusalem-based Panorama Centre, contended that the outcome of the election was indicative of the huge differences between the leadership and people.

"There is difference but there were euphoria" during the elections, said Mr. Abdul Hadi.

According to Mr. Abdul Hadi, the Palestinian people succeeded in meeting all challenges posed in the first democratic experiment in the history of the Palestinian people. The challenge of lack of awareness of women's vital role in participating and voting in the elections, the challenge of facing enormous difficulties and obstacles before Jerusalemites, and the challenge of fighting a democratic battle under difficult circumstances and after decades of occupation were, in Mr. Abdul Hadi's view, challenges that the Palestinian people were able to overcome.

Labour went on to reach agreement with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat providing Palestinian self-rule in

most of the Gaza Strip and much of the West Bank. Palestinian elections were held under the peace deal this month. Many of the winners belong to the PLO.

Likud, which hopes to oust Labour from power in October national elections, still bars its members from talking to PLO representatives.

Mr. Milo made his comment with an eye towards Likud's upcoming central committee meeting which will set policy for the election.

Asked if he thought the committee, when it convened, would accept his position and rule PLO contacts be allowed, Mr. Milo said: "I think the new reality will dictate the behaviour of the Likud people."

Milo: Likud should open talks with PLO

TEL AVIV (R) — A leading member of Israel's opposition Likud Party said on Monday it was time his party talked to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

"There is no doubt that in today's existing political reality we have to talk to the elected Palestinian representatives who are PLO representatives," Roni Milo, currently mayor of Tel Aviv, told Israel Radio.

Mr. Milo served as police minister under the Likud government. Israel outlawed PLO contacts until the present Labour-led government passed a law in early 1993 permitting them.

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Other groups of lawyers, posing as guardians of public morality or public interest, have filed "hisba" suits against Nobel prize winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz, actress Yusra and even the state's antiquities department.

Mr. Ashmawi argued that the restricted hisba in the draft law could still be fatal as it taints the target with apostasy.

"Anybody could still complain or raise an accusation to the prosecutor's office. This is enough to make a fuss against the accused and at the same time give a reason for eliminating him physically after he was eliminated morally," Mr. Ashmawi said.

Like scores of intellectuals under militant threat, he has police guards provided 24 hours a day by the government.

Over the past four years, Muslim fundamentalists have hounded secularists

New Egyptian law offends militants as well as liberals

By Samia Nakhoul
Reuters

CAIRO — The Egyptian government, wavering between liberals and Muslim fundamentalists, has kicked up a hornet's nest with a law designed to stop the fundamentalists imposing their social agenda through the courts.

But the draft law has seriously backfired, leaving the liberals enraged and the government with egg on its face.

The issue at stake is the right of individuals to harass their ideological rivals through the courts on behalf of society as a whole, even if they have no personal interest.

The draft, which passed parliament later on Monday, would give the public prosecutor's office the right to vet such suits before they reach courts which deal with family law.

In one of the most famous such cases, fundamentalist vigilantes last year persuaded the courts to separate prominent academic Nasr Abu Zaid from his wife against her will, on the grounds that Mr. Abu Zaid's writings made him an apostate.

Egyptian cartoonists had a ball with the issue on Monday, in one cartoon, the sports minister asks a bearded Muslim militant sheikh to apply to the courts for a divorce between Egypt's national football team and its foreign manager.

The cartoon in Al-Akhbar newspaper was one of several poking fun at fundamentalists who have used the legal procedure, known by the technical Arabic term "hisba" (proxy or guardianship).

But liberals said the government had made matters worse by introducing the

term "hisba" into the draft. Intellectuals and human rights groups said the government was humouring fanatics through what they called half-hearted amendments.

But one of the most litigious fundamentalists, former Member of Parliament Youssef Al Badri, also criticised the draft, for trying to restrict the right of Muslims to use the device.

"If a man rapes a woman doesn't he get punished by the state? If one citizen kills another, doesn't he get punished? So why is it, when someone insults Islam, he gets away with it?" Mr. Badri told Reuters.

But Saeed Al Ashmawi, a former judge who has campaigned against fundamentalist doctrines, said: "The draft law is very bad. By this procedure the legislator is compromising with the militants and giving

them a legal instrument to threaten and intimidate society, mainly writers, artists and thinkers."

Mr. Ashmawi noted that the hisba draft only affects family law cases, excluding the criminal and other civil cases in which Islamists have declared intellectuals apostates, thus legitimising their execution under Islamic Sharia law.

"The draft law is just organising the procedures and not preventing it. There should be another law to cancel hisba," said Mr. Ashmawi, whom traditional Muslims have declared an apostate and some of whose books they have banned.

Like scores of intellectuals under militant threat, he has police guards provided 24 hours a day by the government.

Over the past four years, Muslim fundamentalists have hounded secularists

writers by shooting or stabbing them, putting them on death lists and defaming them as "infidels" by taking them to courts for blasphemy.

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